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THE FRIENDSHIP OF BOOKS,

AND

OTHER LECTURES.

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BY THE

REV. F. D. MAURICE.

EDITED, WITH A PREFACE,

BY

T. HUGHES, M.P.

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PREFACE.

MANY of those who were most intimately associated with the late Mr. Maurice, in the untiring and many-sided work upon which he so freely spent himself for his country and his fellow-men, were inclined, while he lived, to feel indignant and discouraged that so utterly noble and brave a life was not better appreciated. That the first theologian of their time, who had done more than any other man to widen and deepen English thought, should be entirely ignored by the dispensers of Church patronage, might not indeed have surprised them. He was not of the stuff of which dignitaries are made. It is a rare chance in Church government which lands prophets or apostles in stalls or thrones. But he had claims on the reading and working classes of the nation such as no other man had, and which also seemed to be ignored except by a small minority. His "History of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy" (to mention one only of his greater works) was a mine of learning

made living and human, and of original thought made useful for the humblest student, such as no other living man had produced. In all the higher departments of thought they saw writers borrowing from this and other of his works, much in the same way as American writers do from Mr. Emerson, of whose intellectual orchard the author of "The Fable for Critics" writes:—

> "They might strip every tree and he never would catch 'em,
> His Hesperides have no fierce dragon to watch 'em;
> When they send him a dishful and ask him to try 'em,
> He never suspects how the sly rogues came by 'em,
> He wonders why 'tis there are none such his trees on,
> And thinks 'em the best he has tasted this season."

The plunder was never acknowledged, while the reading public was assured by many of its instructors, who owed the best part of their own thought to Mr. Maurice, that he was confused, mystical, a beater of the air. On the other hand, though he went quietly on bearing the chief burthen of some of the most important social movements of the time, as President, for instance, of the Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations, and Principal of the Working Men's College and of Queen's College, his name was not in men's mouths, and he got none of the help for his well-considered and far-seeing efforts which has been poured in our day *plenâ manu* on all kinds of

empirical and mischievous charities. That he should have looked upon this apparent neglect as a matter of course, and have attributed it to his own shortcomings, was a part of his nature and character. His fault as a leader lay in his readiness to stand aside on the least provocation, to over-estimate other men, and to doubt his own judgment and capacity for practical work. But those who from long experience had found him almost always right, even upon such questions as the best method of conducting the business of manufacturing stout shoes by associated labour, were not unnaturally jealous of this want of appreciation, and impatient at this apparent indifference of his countrymen to the life's battle of one of their best and wisest.

All such jealousies and doubts were indeed in great measure set at rest by the outburst last year—from pulpits of all shades in the Church and of all the Nonconformist bodies, in periodicals and newspapers representing every political section and every class in the nation—which followed the tidings of his death. It was a most remarkable and significant phenomenon, this voice, as it were, of a whole nation testifying, "Well done, good and faithful servant;" and a witness to the depth and penetrating nature of Mr. Maurice's spiritual influence. While rejoicing in so pregnant a proof that England can still recognize her prophets,

at any rate when they are gone from her, one may be pardoned perhaps for a regret that one so sensitive to sympathy should never, while he lived, have known how much he was to the country he loved so deeply, and served so faithfully.

But, through most of the testimony to the influence of his life and writings which was thus called forth, there still ran a singular misunderstanding of the man and his message. It was assumed in the critical part of most of these obituary notices, as a matter of fact which scarcely needed stating, that, with all his earnestness, learning, and knowledge, he was never a clear thinker; and, by some intellectual fault, or shortcoming, was either not able, or not courageous enough mentally (no one ever doubted his perfect moral courage) to follow out his own premises to their legitimate conclusions. To those to whom his memory must always remain amongst their most precious possessions, and for whom he has scattered more mists and slain more hobgoblins than all his contemporaries put together, these accusations of incompleteness, want of clearness, mysticism, have their comic side. They might be well content to let them alone, leaving his works to speak for themselves, if they could only be sure that the persons addressed would go to those works. But as criticisms of this kind may hinder students, and above all young students, from going to

the fountain head, and, as in their judgment it is of quite unspeakable importance, to England's religion and England's thought, that such students *should* do this, they cannot and ought not to keep silence.

A casual expression in one of the ablest and most remarkable books published since his death on the subjects to which he was specially devoted, is a fair specimen of the tone which some of our foremost thinkers on such subjects have allowed themselves in speaking of him, and will serve as well as any to test the worth of such criticism, and the value of Mr. Maurice's teaching. In his "Literature and Dogma," Mr. Arnold speaks of Maurice as "that pure and devout spirit—of whom, however, the truth must at last be said, that in theology he passed his life beating the bush with deep emotion, and never starting the hare." The criticism is, it will be seen, limited to Mr. Maurice's theology; but, as he was always careful to remind his readers and hearers that he "felt as a theologian, thought as a theologian, and wrote as a theologian;" and, as in his last published work he again declares—"all other subjects are to my mind connected with theology, and subordinate to it," the limitation is of no practical value. As a theologian, then, must he be judged; and if in his theology he is vague or timorous, or uses words in a non-natural sense, it is vain to defend him, and he

would not have desired to be defended. Let us see, then, to what the criticism amounts, and what is the quarry which Mr. Maurice was in vain straining all his life to start, but which we presume Mr. Arnold supposes himself to have not only started but run down.

Mr. Arnold gathers into six words his purpose in this remarkable book; "the thing," he says, "is to recast religion." Recognizing the chaotic state of modern thought on the most momentous of all subjects, in the presence of the new forces of criticism and scientific discovery which are being brought to bear upon it, he asks, "is there a substratum, or verifiable basis," of truth which may be made plain to the humblest seeker, and upon which he may found himself and stand firmly "in the revolution which is befalling the religion in which he has been brought up?" It is not necessary to follow the masterly statement, exposition, and argument by which Mr. Arnold arrives at his conclusion that such a verifiable basis exists for himself, or to anticipate what that basis is; but let us note the positions of most value which he successively seizes as he marches triumphantly towards his goal, and makes sure ground not only under his own feet, but under those of the ordinary Englishman, bewildered by this "revolution befalling the religion in which he has been brought up."

Mr. Arnold holds that the attempt to reduce Christianity to a philosophical system, a metaphysical conception, has brought our English people to the point of rejecting the Bible altogether; and that the "pseudo-science of dogmatic theology" which has resulted from that attempt must be destroyed if the Bible is to regain its power. The perplexed English student will get his first foothold here under Mr. Arnold's guidance; and will never again be troubled with the notion that a right knowledge of God depends on ability to reason accurately from terms such as "substance," "identity," "causation," "design," &c. For Mr. Arnold's readers the "metaphysical apparatus," as he calls it, will probably have fallen to pieces finally.

Neither will they require further proof that the revelation contained in the Bible is not dependent on, and cannot be made "solidary" with, the evidence of miracles, or of the fulfilment of prophecy, or even with the reports of Evangelists and Apostles as to the words and deeds of their Master.

More valuable still is Mr. Arnold's exposure of the false antithesis between "natural" and "revealed" religion, which has been current in England, at any rate since Butler's time. The difference between the two, he holds, is not one of kind, but only of degree; the real antithesis, to "natural" and "revealed" alike, being "invented," "artificial." "A system of theological

notions about personality, essence, existence, consubstantiality, is artificial religion, and the proper opposite to 'revealed.'"

Had these negative results been all that we get from Mr. Arnold's book, their value would have been very great, coming from such a quarter: but he not only clears the ground of large heaps of tangle and litter, but builds upon his clearance. "Conduct or righteousness is three-fourths or more of life," and is "a simple and easy matter so far as knowledge is concerned; the whole difficulty lying, not in seeing true and verifying what righteousness is, but in caring for and attending to it." The religion of Israel, as we have it in the Old Testament, is the declaration or revelation for all time of what righteousness is, and that God is the author of it: the religion of the New Testament reveals to us the method and secret by which alone righteousness is possible for men, that is to say, the "method of Jesus," or inwardness and sincerity; the "secret of Jesus," or "self-renunciation." Now, men will no longer accept as true what they cannot verify by experience; but, Mr. Arnold insists, thus much they have verified, thus much each man can verify for himself. "Try, and you will find it to be so," Mr. Arnold sums up; "try all the ways to righteousness you can think of, and you will find that no way brings you to it except the way of

Jesus; but that this way does bring you to it. And, therefore, as we found we could say to the masses, 'Attempt to do without Israel's God, that makes for righteousness, and you will find out your mistake!' so we find we can now go on further, and say, 'Attempt to reach righteousness by any way except that of Jesus, and you will find out your mistake!' This is a thing that can prove itself if it is so; and it will prove itself, because it is so."

Of course it is not pretended for a moment that this is an exhaustive statement of the scope of "Literature and Dogma"—(there are a number of other points brought out with exquisite clearness and keenness, such as the historical method of the Bible revelation; the one strain that runs through it all showing that "whoever of nations or men is shipwrecked, is shipwrecked on conduct;" that the faith which saves is attached to the saving doctrines of the Bible, which are very simple, not to its literary and scientific criticism, which is very hard)—but these are the main positions, apart from the central one. Borrowing his own phrase, we may call them "beatings of the bush," and very searching and able beatings they are, beatings which were clearly necessary before the religion in which we were brought up can be recast for a scientific and critical generation. But then we must take leave to say, that everyone

familiar with Mr. Maurice's works will have travelled the whole ground, over and over again. His first great work, "The Kingdom of Christ," was the strongest attack yet made on the attempts to squeeze Christianity into any system, and on the "logical apparatus" of one kind or another which have been used for this purpose; and in the last of his published works, the preface to his "Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy," written within a year of his death, he recounts, for the last time, "how often I have been tempted to seek a home for my spirit in some particular opinion or system of opinions, and by what gracious influences I have been shown that the fine palace would have been a prison-house."

Again, while Mr. Maurice's teaching as to miracles and prophecy is no doubt very different from Mr. Arnold's, it is at least as clear and emphatic in protesting against the theory that the revelation of the Bible must stand on the evidence of miracles, or the fulfilment of prophecy as commonly understood.

The falseness of the antithesis between natural and revealed religion had been worked out years ago by Mr. Maurice, on parallel lines to Mr. Arnold's, but with greater fulness and clearness. All revelation or discovery, he had taught us, even of the law which is written in men's hearts (the "natural religion" of Butler), must be made by God to men, in

their consciences. And so it is with all scientific discovery. This also is a discovery or unveiling to a man of that which is; which was not called into being by him; of which he is in no sense the author. It was always there. He has been shown that it was always there. He can only tell the world something which has been hidden from it, and which it was intended to know.

And so with respect to the historical method of the Biblical revelation, how, step by step, a man, a family, a nation, all nations, are educated into acknowledgment and worship of righteousness (which, however, Mr. Maurice calls "the living God," as the Old Testament writers do); how the only way to righteousness is through the "method" and "secret" of Jesus; how each man may verify this for himself; how easy the knowledge, how hard the practice, of righteousness is; all these are commonplaces in Mr. Maurice's teaching. So that, without detracting the least from Mr. Arnold, while acknowledging and feeling grateful for the exquisite clearness, the varied learning, and the rare courage he has brought to bear on the great theme he has set himself, one must protest against the tone of his comment on one who had already travelled the same paths, and taken many with him.

But, as has been already said, these are only the

beatings of the bush; we have not yet reached the centre, the cardinal point in such a discussion. No one puts this more strongly than Mr. Arnold. "The whole pinch of the matter is here," he says; "and till we are agreed as to what we mean by God, we can never, in discussing religious questions, understand one another or discuss seriously." And so Mr. Arnold spares no pains to make us see precisely what he means by God. Still maintaining the value as a scientific definition of his former saying that God is "simply the stream of tendency by which all things fulfil the law of their being," he admits its inadequacy for the purposes of the deeper inquiry. Then, after suggesting, by the way, that we use the word God merely as "a deeply-moved way of saying conduct or righteousness," he takes his stand on the formula, "God is the power, not ourselves, which works for righteousness." Now no one would have been more ready than Mr. Maurice to admit the truth of this, so far as it goes. But will not revelation carry us further? Does not Mr. Arnold himself imply that it will, when he says, "So far we know God that He is the Eternal who loveth righteousness, and the further we go in righteousness the more we shall know Him"?

Surely it must be so. But it scarcely appears from his work how far Mr. Arnold is conscious of

the difficulties which he himself has left his readers in, by stopping where he does. The first question that forces itself on them must be, But, after all, what of Christ? Does Mr. Arnold hold Him to be one with "the power, not ourselves, which works for righteousness"? Sometimes we think he does, as when he says, "The kingdom of the Eternal the world is already become, by its chief nations professing the religion of righteousness. The kingdom of Christ the world will have to become, is on its way to become, because the profession of righteousness, except as Christ interpreted righteousness, is vain;" or again, "God's evidence for His Son is this, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. That is, in righteousness we have the sense of being truly alive, and through the method and secret and sweet reasonableness of Jesus, and only through these, we get at righteousness." At other times all is misty and vague, and the sense in which Christ is the Son of God, for Mr. Arnold, appears to be that in which every man who follows righteousness becomes also the son of God.

The same kind of difficulty must be raised in the mind of the humblest reader by Mr. Arnold's dealing with the Spirit of God. Forgetting his usual *epieikeia*, or sweet reasonableness, he speaks of the popular

doctrine of the Trinity in a way which must have given deep pain to many good Christians. But what deliverance does he offer himself from the belief he satirizes so cruelly? First, he tells us, we must re-translate the word πνεῦμα, and speak of the "holy influence." The disciples would find, Jesus tells them, "a new power come to their help after he left them, a power of insight such as they had never had before," but "which *came from God, as Jesus did*," and "said nothing of itself, but only what God said, or Jesus said; a Paraclete, or reinforcement working in aid of God and Jesus, even the spirit of Truth." But is this Spirit, then, one with God, with "the power not themselves"? Again, Mr. Arnold gives them no help, but rather puzzles them further by calling the "paraclete" in another place the "intuition of reality" in yourself; in a third place, "the muse of righteousness," contrasting it with "the muse of art or science," which visited Hesiod when he was tending his sheep on the side of Helicon, and which, according to Mr. Arnold, was an "equally real" influence, equally also "a spirit of Truth."

And now let us turn to Mr. Maurice, of whose theology Mr. Arnold speaks in such pitying, almost contemptuous, tones. He, at any rate, has never avoided the real "pinch of the matter," has indeed

urged, during a long life, with never-tiring insistance, that we must at our peril know what we mean by God. He has also made, as clear as words can make it, what *he* means. God, for Mr. Maurice, is a perfectly loving Father, who has revealed Himself in this character, and is speaking to men by a Son. That Son has been made flesh, has taken men's nature, has dwelt among them, and "in Him is the light of men." His Spirit is in men, speaking to the conscience of each, teaching them how they may be one with Him (namely, through His method, His secret, and sweet reasonableness, as Mr. Arnold would say). This Spirit will guide them into *all* truth; is the same Spirit who reveals artistic and scientific, as well as religious truth to them—irreligious truth Mr. Maurice did not recognize; is the Spirit who is leading them to search for Him in the laws of His universe; is the "Muse" of Hesiod, the "dæmon" of Socrates.

Now this belief is at any rate as clear of "metaphysical apparatus" as Mr. Arnold's own. Is it not also infinitely clearer and simpler in itself? Does it leave us in any of those mists as to the Son of God, and the Spirit of God, which Mr. Arnold raises but entirely fails to dissipate?

One can understand enlightened teachers of our day, to whom the very name of Christian has

become an offence, turning aside from such a belief in annoyance and anger—as indeed so many of them have done—when they recognize in it simply the old creed, which every child in Christendom has been repeating these eighteen hundred years; but that any one of them who really takes the pains to read Mr. Maurice can maintain that the belief itself does not stand out on the face of all his writings, in white light, as plain as words can make it, is less easy to understand. The only explanation (if they have read him) would seem to be that they cannot take his words in their plain natural sense, or believe that one, whom they cannot help acknowledging to be as familiar with all the philosophical systems of the world, and as thorough a master of all their shibboleths as themselves, can be really meaning what he seems to say, when he says this.

Valuable as "Literature and Dogma" will prove to many of his countrymen, the author may assure himself that no one who has learnt from Mr. Maurice will ever be able to think of, or believe in, righteousness without a righteous Being (or Person, if Mr. Arnold will allow us to use a word which offends him more than any other in the "metaphysical apparatus"), will ever be able to think of, or believe in, Providence or foresight, without One who provides, or foresees. But they will rejoice, as their master

would have done, to see so cultivated a thinker as Mr. Arnold bravely and earnestly contending for righteousness, and for the "method," "secret," and "sweet reasonableness," of Christ, though unable to accept what are to them the necessary conclusions from his own premises.

And now let us turn for a moment to the apostles of our other modern Gospels, who have, in like manner, cast pitying or angry words at Mr. Maurice and his theology, or have misunderstood and misstated it in ways which have pained him, while living, more than any abuse would have done.

We are asked by one clever school to write humanity with a big H, and then to fall down and worship it. This, knowing what we ourselves are, and seeing what the remaining items who make up mankind in our time are about, we must decline to do. But, learning from Mr. Maurice, we *can* worship with our whole hearts, a perfect man, whom we have come to know not only as made in the image of, but as one with, God; and through whom we can recognize and reverence the humanity in every man.

His own reply to an otherwise friendly reviewer of this school cannot, at any rate, be reckoned amongst sayings hard to understand. "He affirms," wrote Mr. Maurice, "that I have rendered into a theological

dialect the conceptions of humanity which prevail in our age. I have affirmed that those conceptions of humanity, when separated from the old foundation, which is simply, broadly, satisfactorily announced in the formularies that are repeated by children and peasants in all parts of Christendom, are narrow, impractical, inhuman." (Preface to "Social Morality," p. xiv.)

Mr. Morley, representing, I suppose, another school of the most advanced thinkers, denounced Mr. Maurice's Lectures on the Conscience, as outraging I know not what systems of philosophy, and lying entirely outside all orthodox methods of thought on such subjects. Those who have learnt from him to ask themselves what they mean by "I," and have found his method stand every test to which they can put it, will not be troubled about systems of philosophy, any more than Mr. Arnold is, or than Molière's servant-girl was troubled about the laws of *carte* and *tierce*. They have come to see that neither Butler nor Paley, nor any other philosopher, Christian or heathen, invented the questions about a conscience, or can set them to rest. "They do not exist," as Mr. Maurice says, "in a Volume of Sermons at the Rolls, or of Lectures on Moral Philosophy. If you have not a conscience, Butler will not give it you. If you have one, Paley cannot take it away. They can only, between them,

set you on considering what it is, and what it is not."

On another side "the Revolution," writ also with a big R, is held up to us as the only object of faith for intelligent persons in the times we live in. We glory in our own time, with all its searchings, distresses, perplexities, as much as they; but prefer, with Mr. Maurice, to recognize, through and *in* them all, One who is working out the redemption of the time, and unveiling Himself to our age as He did to our fathers' age, through these throes and strivings of the nations.

We are advised on another side to believe in a God who has made the world for "a prudent, steady, hardy, enduring race of men, who are neither fools nor cowards, and who have no particular love for those who are," and are told that the business of religion is, to threaten or bribe the fools and cowards. The chief preacher of this Gospel is another of our instructors to whom Mr. Maurice's theology has been a sore stumbling-block. But we should doubt whether any wayfarer, conscious that the religion in which he has been brought up wants recasting, will care to exchange for this "Calvinism minus Christianity," as it has been well called, Mr. Maurice's teaching, that all prudence, steadiness, hardiness, endurance, are the good gifts to His children of a God of Love, without whom we all, including the

author in question, should have been fools and cowards —even as these masses.

But of all modern schools of thought, the purely scientific, represented by Mr. Darwin (who, I believe, returned fully the warm admiration which Mr. Maurice felt for him) has most troubled the minds of simple English Christians. A passage or two from Mr. Maurice's writings may, perhaps, lead any such who may read this book to take courage, and look the "Origin of Species" squarely in the face—at any rate it will show them that he could do so:—

"It has been our wont to speak of man as formed in the image of God, and yet as made out of the dust of the earth. I think those who have used the words have been aware—if not at the same moment, yet at certain moments of their lives—of both the facts to which the words point, and have been trying to learn how they are compatible. . . . ."

"I have myself little hope that we shall become fully aware of our relation to One who is above us, if from any cowardly self-glorification we shrink from confessing these baser affinities. The more thoroughly we accept the facts which attest our humiliation, the more overwhelming will be the force of the facts which attest the glory of our human parentage. If Mr. Darwin has added new strength to the one kind of evidence—whether he has or not, as I told you before, I have no right to

affirm, or even to guess—I can have no doubt whence the discoveries have come, or by whom that search has been prompted. I perceive that in his last book he speaks with much reverence of the moral elevation which the belief of a one omnipotent ruler of the universe is likely to produce in those who cherish it. I am afraid that in me such a belief would cause more depression than elevation. Mere omnipotence is crushing. Whereas anyone whose heart confesses that every step in the apprehension of nature or man, or the archetype of man, is due to the education of a loving parent, must be sure that no diligence, such as that of Mr. Darwin, in studying the meanest insect or flower, can be wasted; but will also be sure that the processes in the student himself—the springs of his zeal and patience—must have a far deeper interest, must carry us into another region altogether."

"The Newtonian doctrine, with which Mr. Huxley teaches us to compare the Darwinian, was a wonderful blessing to man, inasmuch as it shook the notion that the planet which contained what most concerned them was the centre of the universe. The moral results of that shaking, and of the belief which followed it, have been invaluable. I do not think we have yet more than begun to take account of them. But there was this disadvantage accompanying the blessing, one which has often led the student of humanity to undervalue it.

When the earth took its subordinate position in the universe, it seemed as if man too had been degraded. We began to talk affectedly and dishonestly of ourselves as 'mere atoms in the infinite regions of space,' whilst each man knew that he did not count himself an atom at all; that he did not reckon sun or stars at a higher rate than his own personal being. Great contradictions, enormous fallacies, were engendered by this mode of speaking and thinking. It seems to me that the students of physics are themselves to supply the counteraction to them. Let them say what they will about the origin of man, it is about *his* origin that all their faculties are chiefly exercised. Whatever may have been his starting point, here he is. Show what atoms he comes from, if you will, and if you can; let any creature you like have been his progenitor, still the diapason closes full on him. More than ever it becomes necessary to look into his actual history; out of whatever egg he has issued, we must try to acquaint ourselves, not so much with the process of his incubation, as with the kind of creature he has become since the shell was broken, and he has acquired a distinct existence."

Is there any want of clearness here? Are these the words of one whose meaning is not plain to himself, or who has any difficulty in expressing it?

If the "religion in which we have been brought up" wants recasting, as no doubt in some sense it

does, let us first look fairly at what has been done in this direction. A man has been amongst us whose work in life was precisely this. And while his writings have exercised an enormous influence on theological thought, his life has been even a greater witness for the truth which he taught; that life of one "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;" "poor, yet making many rich;" "having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Those who have lived and worked with him, cannot but have learnt to know and feel something of the power which transforms men if they will only let it. "He was in those early days, as always," writes one of his oldest friends, speaking of him when he was chaplain of Guy's, "the strongest man I have ever known, if it be strength to do steadily to the end the work which is set before a man, undeterred by any doubts or difficulties, however great and many. Yet I am sure he would have said—and I believe it was true—that the strength was not his own, but that of a Higher will than his own working through his weakness. It was the strength, not of self-assertion, but of self-surrender; the strength of Paul and Christ. It was the consciousness of the prophet and the Apostle, that he was called to a work which he accepted as the business of his life, but which he could only do by a strength greater than his own. It has been well

said that no words can more exactly describe the mission of Maurice than those of St. John—'a man sent from God—the same came to bear witness of the light.' With all his humility, with all his consciousness of his weakness for the work, he never doubted that he was sent from God to bear witness of the Light. Here he was strong, and the source of strength to others. To how many of us has that saintly life and presence borne witness to the Light, even when we were unable to see it for ourselves!"

It is in the hope of bringing this life and teaching to bear on many who have only known Mr. Maurice at second-hand, and only think of him as a theologian and a mystic, whom it is waste of time to endeavour to understand, that the present collection of his addresses is published. They are taken as samples, almost at hazard, from a vast number which he delivered in all parts of the country, to all kinds of audiences. While they illustrate how completely his theology underlay all his thoughts, they will show how fresh and vigorous, above all how intensely national and human, that theology is; how it enables him, always using the same method, to put men and periods before us with a distinctness, a vividness, and a sympathy which few writers have ever equalled. Any one of the addresses will serve to illustrate this method. Take, for instance, the one "On Words," and see how

entirely he does justice to the work of Johnson and of Horne Tooke, how heartily he recognizes the worth of what each of them was asserting, while he brings out the deeper truth which lies behind,—that words are not mere counters, but living powers, which grow and change and decay with the growth and decay of the men and nations who use them. And so with all men and sects and parties who have exercised any real influence in the world. His intense sympathy enables him to see clearly the truth which each was asserting, to rejoice in the strength of that assertion, to maintain that that assertion was not and could not be made too strongly, and at the same time, with equal clearness and power, to mark where they become deniers of the truth which others are asserting, and begin to assume that their own side of the truth is the whole.

But it is unnecessary further to dwell on what will soon make itself plain to every intelligent reader; and one can only hope that some of these, when they have come to feel how keen and deep Mr. Maurice's insight is—how firmly he can seize on and handle literary, political, and social questions—how in a few sentences he sheds light on men and things, showing us, as it were with a flash, the clue which we may perhaps have been groping for through weary years—will take courage, and make trial of the same guidance (despite

of Mr. Arnold, and other preachers of new religions and no religions) in that deepest of all studies, which the times in which they live will not suffer any man who means to do his work honestly in the world, to neglect or thrust aside.

THOMAS HUGHES.

P.S.—Since the above Preface was written, Mr. Mill's autobiography has been published. Among other contemporaries with whom he came in contact during his remarkable intellectual life, he names and gives with characteristic candour and fairness an estimate of Frederick Maurice. In appreciation of mere intellect, probably few men's judgments could be better worth considering. He thus speaks: "I have so deep a respect for Maurice's character and purposes, as well as for his great mental gifts, that it is with some unwillingness I say anything which may seem to place him on a less high eminence than I would gladly be able to accord to him. But I have always thought that there was more intellectual power wasted in Maurice than in any other of my contemporaries. Few of them certainly have had so much to waste. Great powers of generalization, rare ingenuity and subtlety, and a wide perception of important and unobvious truths, served him not for putting something better into the place of the worthless heap of received

opinions on the great subjects of thought, but for proving to his own mind that the Church of England had known everything from the first, and that all the truths on the ground of which the Church and orthodoxy have been attacked (many of which he saw as clearly as anyone), are not only consistent with the Thirty-nine Articles, but are better understood and expressed in these Articles than by anyone who rejects them."

This testimony, given by an able and candid man, eminent above most in the exercise of the intellect, to Mr. Maurice's intellectual eminence, is not the only or the main reason for quoting the passage here. It is surely worth considering whether the method in which Mr. Maurice used his intellect, so strongly condemned by Mr. Mill, is not substantially the same method whereby the doctrine of Evolution in the physical world has been maintained by modern philosophers, but applied by Mr. Maurice to theological and ethical, not merely to physical matters. If Mr. Maurice, in examining the "heap of received opinions," which might better surely be designated the mass of deep convictions whereby Englishmen and men of other nations had been enabled to live righteous and noble lives, sought to sever what was worthy from what was worthless, can that be called *waste* of high mental gifts?

Besides, it is not true that Mr. Maurice ever wrote anything to justify the representation here given. Mr. Mill had probably in his mind a pamphlet published in 1835, while Mr. Maurice was a young Oxford graduate—"Subscription no Bondage," which was a defence of the Articles as guides to thought, not as mere dogmatic formulæ hampering the conscience. Even this pamphlet, whether successful or not in its aim, does not justify the phrase, that Mr. Maurice held "that the Church of England had known everything from the first." But readers of "The Kingdom of Christ" or "The Religions of the World" will know how far this is from being an accurate account of how Mr. Maurice used his "great mental gifts," and whether they really were "wasted." It has been noticed already how he received Mr. Darwin's theory. The habit of mind that led him to trace a unity and progress in theological and ethical thought among men and churches, prepared him to accept and recognize the same law in natural things. If Mr. Mill had studied and followed up, in his own way, the method of Mr. Maurice in these respects, it might not have fallen to him to have written probably one of the saddest passages ever penned, where *finality*, not in *cause* but in *result*, faces him as a possibility, driving him to despair, from which his account of his deliverance scarcely seems

satisfactory—the opening of the fifth chapter of his autobiography. Other students may hereafter learn that some of the "unobvious truths" which Mr. Maurice's mental gifts enabled him to discover are worth their attention.

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LECTURES.

I.

ON THE FRIENDSHIP OF BOOKS.[1]

I HAVE proposed to speak to you this evening on the Friendship of Books. I have some fear that an age of reading is not always favourable to the cultivation of this friendship. I do not mean that we are in any special danger of looking upon them as enemies. That is no doubt the temptation of some persons. I have known both boys and men who have looked at books with a kind of rage and hatred, as if they were the natural foes of the human species. I am far from thinking that these were bad boys or bad men; nor were they stupid. Some of them I have found very intelligent, and have learnt much from them. I could trace the dislike in some cases to a cause which I thought honourable. The dogs and horses which they did care

[1] Delivered first at Ellesmere, at the request of Archdeacon Allen, in the autumn of 1856; afterwards at Harrow.

about, and were always on good terms with, they regarded as living creatures, who could receive affection, and in some measure could return it. Their horses could carry them over hills and moors; their dogs had been out with them from morning till night, and took interest in the pursuit that was interesting them. Books seemed to them dead things in stiff bindings, that might be patted and caressed ever so much and would take no notice, that knew nothing of toil or pleasure, of hill or stubble-field, of sunrise or sunsetting, of the earnest chase or the feast after it. Was it not better to leave them in the shelves which seemed to be made for them? Was it not treating them most respectfully not to finger or soil them, but to secure the services of a housemaid who should occasionally dust them?

I frankly own that I have great sympathy with these feelings, and with those who entertain them. If books are only dead things, if they do not speak to one, or answer one when one speaks to them, if they have nothing to do with the common things that we are busy with—with the sky over our head, and the ground under our feet—I think that they had better stay on the shelves; I think any horse or dog, or tree or flower, is a better companion for human beings than they are. And therefore I say again, it is not with those who count them enemies that I find fault. They have much to say for themselves; if their premises are right they are right in their conclusions. What I regret is that many of us spend much of our time in reading books, and in

talking of books—that we like nothing worse than the reputation of being indifferent to them, and nothing better than the reputation of knowing a great deal about them; and yet that, after all, we do not know them in the same way as we know our fellow-creatures, not even in the way we know any dumb animal that we walk with or play with. This is a great misfortune, in my opinion, and one which I am afraid is increasing as what we call "the taste for literature" increases. I cannot enter into all the different reasons which lead me to think so, nor can I trace the evil to its source. But I will mention one characteristic of the reading in our times, which must have much to do with it.

A large part of our reading is given to Reviews, and Magazines, and Newspapers. Now I am certain that these must have a very important use. We should all of us be trying to find out what the use of them is, because it is clear that we are born into an age in which they exercise great power; and that fact must bring a great responsibility, not only upon those who wield the power, but upon us who have to see that it does us good, and not hurt. But whatever good effects works of this kind may have produced, we certainly are not able to make them our friends. Perhaps you will wonder that I should say that a newspaper or a review is a much less awful thing than a quarto or a folio—I mean of course to those who are not going themselves to be cut up in it, but only to have the pleasure of seeing their friends and neighbours cut up.

Moreover the writer of the newspaper or magazine, or Review, commonly assumes an off-hand, dashing air. He has a number of colloquial phrases, and stock jests, which seem intended to put us at our ease. He speaks in a loud, rattling tone, like one who wishes to shake hands the first time you meet him. But then, when you stretch out your hand, what is it you meet? Not that of a man, but of a shadow, of something that calls itself "We." Be friends with a "We"! How is that possible? If the mist is scattered, if we discover that there is an actual human being there, then the case is altered altogether. If Lord Jeffrey, or Mr. Macaulay, or Sir James Stephen, publishes articles which he has written in a Review, with his name affixed to them, or if a "*Times* Correspondent" whom, in our superstition, we had supposed to be one of the fairies or genii that descend from some other world to our planet, appears with an ordinary name, and dressed like a mortal, why, then we feel we are on fair terms. A person is presenting himself to us, one who may have a right to judge us, but who is willing to be tried himself by his peers. That, you see, is because the *We* has become an *I*. All his apparent dignity is dissolved; we can recognize him as a fellow-creature.

Now, I do not say this the least in condemnation of Reviewers, or of any person who for any reasons whatever thinks it better to call himself *We* than *I*. I only say that there is no *friendship* under such conditions as this; that we never can make any book our

friend until we look upon it as the work of an *I*. It is the principle which I hope to maintain throughout this lecture, and therefore I begin with stating it at once. I want to speak to you about a few books which exhibit very transparently, I think, what sort of a person he was who wrote them, which show *him* to us. I think we shall find that there is the charm of the book, the worth of the book. He may be writing about a great many things; but there is a man who writes; and when you get acquainted with that man, you get acquainted with the book. It is no more a collection of letters and leaves; it is *a friend*.

I mean to speak entirely, or almost entirely, of English books. And I shall begin with a writer who seems to offer a great exception to the remark I have just made. If I thought he was really an exception, I should be much puzzled, or rather I should give up my position altogether. For, since he is the greatest and the best known of all English authors, for him to be an instance against me would be a clear proof that I was wrong. We continually hear this observation, "William Shakespeare is not to be found in any of his plays." It is his great and wonderful distinction that he is not. Othello speaks his word, Hamlet his, Bottom the Weaver his; Desdemona, Imogen, Portia, each her word. But Shakespeare does not intrude himself into any of their places; he does not want us to know what he thought about this matter or that. If you look into one corner or another for him, he is not there. It

would appear, then, according to my maxim, as if Shakespeare could never be his reader's friend. It would appear as if he were the great precedent for all newspaper writers and reviewers, as if he were overlooking mankind just as they do, and had the best possible right to describe himself as a *We*, and not as an *I*.

Well, that sounds very plausible, and, like everything that sounds plausible, there is a truth at the bottom of it. But that the truth is not this, I think the feeling and judgment of the people of England (I might say of the continents of Europe and of America) might convince you, without any arguments of mine. For they have been so sure that there was a William Shakespeare, they were so certain that he had a local habitation and a name, that they have rummaged parish registers, hunted Doctors' Commons for wills, made pilgrimages to Stratford-upon-Avon, put together traditions about old houses and shops, that they might make, if possible, some clear image of him in their minds. I do not know that they have succeeded very well. The facts of his biography are few. A good deal of imagination has been needed to put them together, and to fill up the blanks in them. I do not suppose registers, or wills, or old houses, will give many more answers concerning him. But that only shows, I think, how very clear a witness his own works give, even when the outward information is ever so scanty, of the man that he was, and of the character-

istics which distinguished him from his fellows. If you ask me how I reconcile this assertion with the undoubted fact that he does not put himself forward as other dramatists do, and give his own opinions instead of allowing the persons of his drama to utter theirs, I should answer, Have you found that the man who is in the greatest hurry to tell you all that he thinks about all possible things, is the friend that is best worth knowing? Have you found that the one who talked most about himself and his own doings is the most worth knowing? Do you not generally become rather exhausted with men of his kind? Do not you say sometimes, in Shakespeare's own words, or rather in Falstaff's, "I do see to the bottom of this same Justice Shallow; he has told me all he has to tell. There is no reserve in him, nothing that is worth searching after"? On the other hand, have you not met with some men who very rarely spoke about their own impressions and thoughts, who seldom laid down the law, and yet who you were sure had a fund of wisdom within, and who made you partakers of it by the light which they threw on the earth in which they were dwelling, especially by the kindly, humorous, pathetic way in which they interested you about your fellow-men, and made you acquainted with them? I do not say that this is the only class of friends which one would wish for. One likes to have some who in quiet moments are more directly communicative about their own sufferings and struggles. But certainly you would

not say that men of the other class are not very pleasant, and very profitable. Of this class Shakespeare is the most remarkable specimen. Instead of being a Reviewer who sits above the universe, and applies his own narrow rules to the members of it, he throws himself with the heartiest and most genial sympathy into the feelings of all, he understands their position and circumstances, he perceives how each must have been affected by them. Instead of being a big, imaginary *We*, he is so much of a man himself that he can enter into the manhood of people who are the farthest off from him, and with whom he has the least to do. And so, I believe, his books may become most valuable friends to us—to us especially who ought to be acquainted with what is going on with all kinds of people. Every now and then, I think (especially perhaps in the characters of Hamlet and of Prospero), one discovers signs how Shakespeare as an individual man had fought and suffered. I quite admit, however, that his main work is not to do this, but to help us in knowing ourselves—the past history of our land, the people we are continually meeting. And any book that does this is surely a friend.

Before I leave Shakespeare, I would speak of the way in which he made friends with books. Perhaps I can do it best by comparing his use of them with the use which was made of them by a very clever and accomplished contemporary of his. Ben Jonson, though he was the son of a bricklayer, made himself a thoroughly good Latin and Greek scholar. He read the best Latin

books, and the commentaries which illustrated them; he wrote two plays on subjects taken from Roman history. Very striking subjects they were. The hero of one was Catiline, who tried to overthrow the social order of the Republic; the hero of the other was Sejanus, who represents, by his grandeur and his fall, the very character and spirit of the Empire in the days of Tiberius. In dealing with these subjects, Ben Jonson had the help of two of the greatest Roman authors, both of them possessing remarkable powers of narration, one of them a man of earnest character, subtle insight, deep reflection. Though few men in his day understood these authors, and the government and circumstances of Rome, better than Jonson, though he was a skilful and experienced play-writer, most readers are glad when they have got Catiline and Sejanus fairly done with. They do not find that they have received any distinct impressions from them of Roman life; to learn what it was they must go to the authors whom he has copied. Shakespeare wrote three plays on Roman subjects,—Coriolanus, Julius Cæsar, Antony and Cleopatra. He knew very little of Latin, and the materials he had to work with were a tolerable translation of Livy's History, and a capital one of Plutarch's Lives. With no aid but these, and his knowledge of Warwickshire peasants, and London citizens, he has taught us more of Romans —he has made us more at home in their city, and at their fireside, than the best historians who lived upon the soil are able to do. Jonson studied their books;

Shakespeare made *friends* of them. He did just the same with our old Chronicles. He read of King John, of Richard II., of John of Gaunt, of Harry of Lancaster, of Hotspur and Owen Glendower, of the good Humphrey of Gloucester and the dark Cardinal Beaufort, of Wolsey and of Catherine. He read of them, and they stood up before him, real armed men, or graceful sorrowing women. Instead of being dead letters they all became living persons; not appearing in solitary grandeur, but forming groups; not each with a fixed immoveable nature, but acted upon and educated by all the circumstances of their times; not dwelling in an imaginary world, but warmed by the sun of Italy, or pinched by the chilly nights of Denmark—essentially men such as are to be found in all countries and in all ages, and therefore exhibiting all the varieties of temperament and constitution which belong to each age, and to each country.

Shakespeare's mind was formed in an age when men were at work, and when they wanted books to explain and illustrate their work. He lived on into another, when men began to value books for their own sakes. James I., who was called a Solomon (and who would have deserved that name if Solomon had not considered that his wisdom was given him that he might rule his subjects well, and if James had not supposed that his was given for every purpose except that), was the great promoter of this worship of books. But they did not speak to Englishmen of that which was going on around

them, as they had done in Elizabeth's time. Learned people drew a line about themselves, and signified to common people who had business that they must keep their distance. Still there were many influences which counteracted this tendency. One man, who was not free from it by any means, helped to check it by opening to his fellows a new and real world. Lord Bacon found that they knew the secrets of Nature only through books, that they did not come freely and directly into contact with them; he showed them how they might converse with the things they saw, how they might know them as they were in themselves, instead of only seeing them distorted by their spectacles. That was a great work to do; and as I said, it was never more wanted than just at this time, when men were in danger of falling so much in love with the letters in books as to forget into what a universe of mysteries God had put His creature man that he might search them out. Bacon reverenced the study of Nature more than he did the study of Man; and no wonder! For he found out what a beautiful order there was in Nature; and though I believe he looked for an order in human affairs too, and sometimes discerned, and always wished for it, yet there is no denying that he had a keen eye for the disorders and wrong-doings of his fellow-men, and that he rather reconciled himself to them than sought to remedy them. I refer to him, because I fancy that many have a notion of his books on the Interpretation of Nature as very valuable for scientific men, and his books on Morals and Politics as very

wise for statesmen and men of the world, but not as friends. They form this notion because they suppose, that the more we knew of Bacon himself, the less sympathy we should have with him. I should be sorry to hold this opinion, because I owe him immense gratitude; and I could not cherish it if I thought of him, even as the sagest of book-makers and not as a human being. I should be sorry to hold it, because if I did not find in him a man who deserved reverence and love, I should not feel either the indignation or the sorrow which I desire to feel for his misdoings. Niebuhr said of Cicero that he knew his faults as well as anybody, but that he felt as much grieved when people spoke of them as if he were his brother. That is the right way to feel about great men who are departed, and I do not think that an Englishman should feel otherwise about Bacon. It is hard to measure the exact criminality of his acts; one of the truest sentences ever passed on them was his own. His words are faithful transcripts of both his strength and weakness. There are some, especially of his dedications, which one cannot read without a sense of burning shame; there are passages in the very treatises which those dedications introduce that it does one's heart good to remember, and which we are inwardly sure must have come from the heart of him who put them into language. He does not give us at all the genial impressions of other men which Shakespeare gives, but he detects very shrewd tricks which we practise upon ourselves. His worldly wisdom is what we have most to

dread, lest he should make us contented with the wrong in ourselves, and in the society about us, and should teach us to admire low models. But if we apply to our moral pursuits the zeal for truth, and the method of seeking it and of escaping from our own conceits, which he imparts to us in his physical lessons, if we consider his own errors, and his punishment for tolerating and embracing the base maxims of his time, we shall find him all the safer as a guide because we have felt with him as a friend. When we do that we can always appeal from the man to himself; we can say: "Thank you heartily for what you have said to me; but there were clouds about you when you were here; you did not always walk with straight feet, and with your eyes turned to the light. Now you know better, and I will make use of what you tell me, as well as of all that I can learn about your doings, as warnings to keep me from wandering to the right or to the left."

I might speak of other books in this bookish time of James I., which many of us have found valuable and genial friends; as for instance the poems of George Herbert, which nobody that ever reads them can think of merely as poems; they are so completely the utterances of the heart of an affectionate, faithful, earnest man, they speak so directly to whatever is best in ourselves, and give us such friendly and kindly admonitions about what is worst. But I must go on to the next period, which was a period of action and strife, when men could no more regard writing books, or even

reading them, as an amusement; when the past must be studied for the sake of the present, or not at all. John Milton belongs to that time. He was the most learned of all our poets, the one who from his childhood upwards was a devourer of Greek and Latin books, of the romances of the Middle Ages, of French and Italian poetry, above all of the Hebrew Scriptures. All these became his friends; for all of them connected themselves with the thoughts that occupied men in his own time, with the deep religious and political controversies which were about to bring on a civil war. Many persons think that the side which he took in that war must hinder us from making his books our friends; that we may esteem him as a great poet, but that we cannot meet him cordially as a man. No one is more likely to entertain that opinion than an English clergyman, for Milton dealt his blows unsparingly enough, and we come in for at least our full share of them. I know all that, and yet I must confess that I have found him a friend, and a very valuable friend, even when I have differed from him most and he has made me smart most. It does not strike me that on the whole we profit most by the friends who flatter us. We may be stirred up to the recollection of our duty by those who speak stern and terrible words, of us, and of our class. If we are persuaded that they are utterly wrong in condemning the institutions to which we are attached, we may often admit that they are very right in condemning us for the sins which hinder men from seeing

the worth of those institutions. I do not know anyone who makes us feel more than Milton does the grandeur of the ends which we ought to keep always before us, and therefore our own pettiness and want of courage and nobleness in pursuing them. I believe he failed to discern many of the intermediate relations which God has established between Himself and us; but I know no one who teaches us more habitually, that disobedience to the Divine will is the seat of all misery to men. I would rather converse with him as a friend than talk of him as a poet; because then we put ourselves into a position to receive the best wisdom which he has to give us, and that wisdom helps to purge away whatever dross is mingled with it; whereas if we merely contemplate him at a distance as a great genius, we shall receive some powerful influence from him, but we shall not be in a condition to compare one thing that he says to us with another. And to say the truth, I do not know what genius is, except it be that which begets some life in those who come in contact with it, which kindles some warmth in them. If there is genius in a poem, it must have been first in the poet; and if it was in the poet, it must have been because he was not a stock or a stone, but a breathing and suffering man. And there is no writer whose books more force upon us the thought of him as a person than Milton's. There are few passages in his prose writings, full as they are of gorgeous passages, more beautiful than that in which he defends himself from the charge of entering from

choice or vanity into controversies, by alleging the far different object and kind of writing to which from his youth upwards he had desired to devote himself. And in his latest poem of "Samson Agonistes," where what he had learnt from the play-writers of Greece is wonderfully raised, and mellowed, and interpreted by what he had learnt from the Old Testament, he himself speaks to us in every line. He transfers himself to the prison of Samson in Gaza; he is the blind, downcast, broken man whom God appears to have cast off. The thought of God as the Deliverer gives him a consolation which nothing else can give; he looks forward to some triumph which God will give to his race, as the only hope for himself.

I have dwelt some time upon these "friends" because Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, are the greatest names in our literature, and therefore it was important for my purpose to show you that *their* books do fulfil the purpose which I have said all books ought to fulfil. I might very fairly have gone back, and spoken to you of older writers than these. I might have spoken of the time of our Edward III., and have given you some proofs that our first poet, Chaucer, was a cordial, genial, friendly man, who could tell us a great many things which we want to know about his own time, and could also break down the barrier between his time and ours, and make us feel, that, though our dress may be very much unlike theirs, and our houses a good deal better, and our language a little less French, yet that on the

whole our fathers worked at much the same trades as we do, fell into the same kind of sins, looked up at the same skies, had the same wants in their hearts, and required that they should be satisfied in the same way. I might have spoken to you also of some of the men who flourished at the time of the Reformation—of Latimer for instance, whose broad, simple, humorous sermons address themselves to all the common sympathies of Englishmen, and are as free from starch and buckram as anyone could wish. I might have spoken to you also of some of Shakespeare's contemporaries, especially of that delightful and instructive companion Spenser's "Faery Queen," which makes us feel that without stepping a yard from our native English ground, or deserting any of our common occupations, we may be, ay and must be, engaged in a great fight with invisible enemies, and that we have invisible champions on our side. But as I have not time to speak of many books to-night, I have passed over these, and have begun at once with those which, for one reason or another, people are most likely to think of as having claims upon their respect rather than upon their friendship. That must be my reason too for not dwelling upon a book belonging to Milton's time, which many people would at once recognize as a delightful friend; I mean Izaak Walton's "Angler." Knowing nothing of his craft, I should only betray my ignorance by entering upon it, and should lessen the pleasure which some of you, I dare say, have received from its quiet

descriptions, and devout reflections. But I am glad to remember that there is such a book in our libraries, even if I understand very little of it, because it is one of the links between the life of the woods and streams and the life of the study, which it would be a great misfortune for us to lose.

A link between this age and the one that follows it is found in Thomas Fuller, one of the liveliest and yet, in the inmost heart of him, one of the most serious writers one can meet with. I speak of this writer partly because there is no one who is so resolute that we should treat him as a friend, and not as a solemn dictator. By some unexpected jest, or comical turn of expression, he disappoints your purpose of receiving his words as if they were fixed in print, and asserts his right to talk with you, and convey his subtle wisdom in his own quaint and peculiar dialect.

Fuller uses his wit to make his reader a friend. The writers of Charles II.'s court used their wit to prove that there could be no such thing as friendship with either books or men, that it was altogether a ridiculous obsolete sentiment. They established their point so far as they themselves were concerned; one has no right to ask of them what they had not to give. But their punishment is a singular one. They wished to pass for men of the world, and not for vulgar bookwrights. We are obliged to regard them as bookwrights simply, and not as men at all. There is one exception. John Dryden stands apart from the men whose vices infected

him, not merely because his style in prose and verse was immeasurably more vigorous than theirs, but because his confused life, and his evil companions, did not utterly destroy his heart. I do not know that one could make the writings of John Dryden friends; so many of the very cleverest of them are bitter satires, containing a great deal of shrewd observation, sometimes just, as well as severe, but certainly not binding us by any strong ties of affection to their author. Yet there is such a tragedy in the history of a mind so full of power as his, and so unable to guide itself amidst the shoals and quicksands of his time, that I believe we need not, and that we cannot, speak of him merely with the admiration which is due to his gifts; we must feel for him somewhat of the pity that is akin to love. Mr. Macaulay charges Dryden with changing his religion chiefly that he might get a pension from James II. I do not believe that was his motive, or that the lesson from his life would be worth as much as it is if it had been. If we compare his "Religio Laici" which he wrote in his former, with his "Hind and Panther" which expressed his later opinions, I think we may perceive that his mind was unhinged, that he found nothing fixed or certain in heaven or earth, and that he drifted naturally wherever the tide of events carried him. That is the fate which may befall many who have no right to be described as mercenary time-servers.

However, one is glad to escape from this age, which had

become a very detestable one, and to find ourselves in one which, though not exemplary for goodness, produced books of which we can very well make friends. If you take up the "Spectator," or the "Guardian," your first feeling is that the writers in it wish to cultivate your friendship. They have thrown off the stiff manners of those who reckon it their chief business to write books; at the same time they do not affect to be men of the world despising books. Their object is to bring books and people of the world into a good understanding with each other; to make fine ladies and gentlemen somewhat wiser and better behaved by feeding them with good and wholesome literature; to show the student what things are going on about him, that he may not be a mere pedant and recluse. I do not mean that this was the deliberate purpose of Addison and Steele. It was the natural effect of their position that they took this course. They had been educated as scholars; they entered into civil life, and became members of Parliament. The two characters were mixed in them, and when they wrote books they could not help showing that they knew something of men. The two men were well fitted to work together. Addison had the calmer and clearer intellect; he had inherited a respect for English faith and morality. Steele, with a more wavering conduct, had perhaps even more reverence in his inmost heart for goodness. Between them they appeared just formed to give a turn to the mind of their age; not presenting to society a very heroical standard, but

raising it far above the level to which it had sunk, and is apt to sink.

The "Spectator" and the "Guardian" have sometimes been called the beginning of our periodical literature. Perhaps they are; but they are very unlike what we describe by that name in our day. There is no *We* in them. Though the papers have letters of the alphabet, and not names, put to them, and though they profess to be members of a club, each writer calls himself *I*. You can hardly conceive what a difference it would make in the pleasure with which you read any paper, if the singular pronoun were changed for the plural. The good-humour of the writing would evaporate immediately. You would no longer find that you were in the presence of a kindly, friendly observer, who was going about with you, and pointing out to you this folly of the town, and that pleasant characteristic of a country gentleman's life. All would be the dry, hard criticism of some distant being, who did not take you into his counsels at all, but merely told you what you were to think or not to think. And with the good-humour, what we call the *humour* when we do not prefix the adjective to it, would also disappear. Mr. Thackeray, the most competent person possible for such a task, has introduced Addison and Steele among the *humorists* of England, and has shown very clearly both how the humour of the one differed from that of the other, and how unlike both were to Dean Swift, who is the best and most perfect specimen of ill-humour,—

that is to say, of a man of the keenest intellect and the most exquisite clearness of expression, who is utterly out of sorts with the world and with himself. Addison is on good terms with both. He amuses himself with people, not because he dislikes them, but because he likes them, and is not discomposed by their absurdities. He does not go very far down into the hearts of them; he never discovers any of the deeper necessities which there are in human beings. But everything that is upon the surface of their lives, and all the little cross-currents which disturb them, no one sees so accurately, or describes so gracefully. In certain moods of our mind, therefore, we have here a most agreeable friend, one who tasks us to no great effort, who does not set us on encountering any terrible evils, or carrying forward any high purpose, but whom one must always admire for his quietness and composure; who can teach us to observe a multitude of things that we should else pass by, and reminds us that in man's life, as in nature, there are days of calm and sunshine as well as of storm.

But though one may have a very pleasant and useful conversation with this kind-hearted "Spectator" now and then, I do not think that such conversation would brace one to the hard work of life, or would enable one to sympathise with those who are engaged in it. We must remember that a very considerable majority of the world do not ride in coaches, as nearly all those we read of in the "Spectator" do; that to earn bread by

the sweat of the brow is the common heritage of the sons of Adam, and that it is a great misfortune not to understand *that* necessity, even if circumstances have exempted us from it. For that reason some of us may welcome another friend, far less happy and genial than Addison, often very rough and cross-grained, with rude inward affection. Old Samuel Johnson had none of Addison's soft training. He had nothing to do with the House of Commons, except as a contraband reporter; he had not the remotest chance of being a Secretary of State even if he had not been a fierce Tory, and in the reign of George II. all but a Jacobite. With only booksellers for his patrons, obliged to seek his bread from hand to mouth by writing for them what they prescribed, with a bad digestion, a temper anything but serene, a faith certainly as earnest as Addison's, but which contemplated its objects on the dark and not on the sunny side, he offers the greatest contrast one can conceive to the happy well-conditioned man of whom I have just been speaking. The opposition between them is all the more remarkable because the "Rambler" was formed on the model of the "Spectator," and because Johnson as much as Addison belongs to what ought to be called the Club Period of English literature. I do not suppose anyone will be bold enough to vindicate that name, be it good or evil, for our day, merely because gentlemen are now able to eat solitary dinners, hear news, and sleep over newspapers and magazines, in very magnificent houses

in Pall Mall. The genuine Club, though its locality might be in some dark alley out of Fleet Street, was surely that in which men of different occupations after the toil of the day met to exchange thoughts. In that world Johnson flourished even more than Addison. The latter is accused by Pope of giving his little senate laws; but Johnson's senate contained many great men who yet listened to his oracles with reverence. And those oracles were not delivered in sentences of three clauses ending in a long word in "tion," like those papers in the "Rambler" which are so well parodied in the "Rejected Addresses" I think that young men ought undoubtedly to be early warned of these pompous sentences, not because it is worse to imitate this style than any other—for we have no business to imitate any (our style must be our own, or it is worth nothing)—but because it is particularly easy to catch this habit of writing, and to fancy there is substance when there is only wind. But I cannot admit that Johnson's most inflated sentences contain mere wind. He had something to put into them; they did express what he felt, and what he was, better than simpler, more English, more agreeable ones would have done. He adopted them naturally; they are part of himself; if we want to be acquainted with him, we must not find fault with them. And when he is describing scenes, as in "Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia," he is often quite free and picturesque; when he is writing about business, as in his "Falkland Island," he

does not let his eloquence, which in that book is often very splendid, hinder him from being pointed and direct in his blows. He falls into what some people call King Cambyses' vein chiefly when he is moralizing on the condition of the world, and the disappointment of all man's hopes and projects in it. In his club, no one could speak with more straightness, wasting no words, but bringing out the thing he wants to say in the strongest and most distinct dress that could be found. One may not agree in half of the opinions he expresses, and may think that he delivers them very dogmatically. If one looked either at his writings or at Boswell's Life of him merely as books, one would go away very discontented and very angry; but when one thinks of both as exhibiting to us a man, the case becomes altogether different. We are all greatly indebted, I think, to Mr. Carlyle, for having determined that we should contemplate Johnson in this way, and not chiefly as a critic or a lexicographer. We may judge of him in those characters very differently; but in himself Mr. Carlyle has shown most clearly that he deserves our sympathy and our reverence.

There were two members of Johnson's club to each of whom he was sincerely attached, and who were attached to each other, though in their habits, occupations, talents, modes of thinking, they were as unlike him, and unlike each other, as any two men could be. They had, indeed, a common origin—Oliver Goldsmith and Edmund

Burke were both Irishmen. But Goldsmith carried his country about with him wherever he went; he was always blundering, and reckless, and good-natured. Burke only showed where he had been born by his zeal for the improvement of his country whenever its affairs came under discussion. I believe that these two men, with the vast differences that there are between them, may both become our friends, and that we shall not thoroughly enjoy the "Deserted Village," or the "Vicar of Wakefield," or the "Speeches on American Taxation," or the "Reflections on the French Revolution," unless they do. All Goldsmith's friensd were always scolding him, laughing at him, and learning from him. They found that he had a fund of knowledge which he had picked up they could not tell how, but apparently by sympathising with all the people that he came into contact with, and so getting to be really acquainted with them. He compiled histories without much learning about the people he was writing of; yet he did not make them false or foolish, because he had more notion than many diligent historians have of what men must be like in any latitudes. In his poetry he never goes out of his depth; he speaks of things which he has seen and felt himself, and so it tells us of him if it does not tell us of much else. In spite of all his troubles he is as good-natured as Addison; only he mixed with a different class of people from Addison, and can tell us of country vicars and their wives and daughters, though he may not know

much of a Sir Roger de Coverley. His books, I think, must be always pleasant, as well as profitable, friends, provided we do not expect from them, as we ought not to expect from any friend, more than they profess to give.

Burke is a friend of another order. Johnson said of him that if you met him under a gateway in a shower of rain you must perceive that he was a remarkable man. I do not think we can take up the most insignificant fragment of the most insignificant speech or pamphlet he ever put forth, without arriving at the same conviction. But he does what is better than make us acknowledge him as a remarkable man. He makes us acknowledge that we are small men, that we have talked about subjects of which we had little knowledge, and the principles of which we had imperfectly sounded.

He told the electors of Bristol that they might reject him if they pleased, but that he should maintain his position as an English statesman and an honest man. They did reject him, of course, but his speech remains as a model for all true men to follow, as a warning to all who adopt another course, that they may make friends for the moment, but that they will not have a friend in their own conscience, and that their books, if they leave any, will be no friends to those who read them in the times to come.

Away from the club in which Johnson, Burke, and Goldsmith were wont to meet, in a little village in

Buckinghamshire, dwelt another poet, who was not uninterested in their doings, and who had in his youth mixed with London wits. William Cowper inspired much friendship among men, and still more among women, during his lifetime; they found him the pleasantest of all companions in his bright hours, and they did not desert him in his dark hours. His books have been friends to a great many since he left the earth, because they exhibit him very faithfully in both; some of his letters and some of his poems being full of mirth and quiet gladness, some of them revealing awful struggles and despair. Whatever estimate may be formed of his poetry in comparison with that of earlier or later writers, everyone must feel that his English is that of a scholar and a gentleman—that he had the purest enjoyment of domestic life, and of what one may call the domestic or still life of nature. One is sure also that he had the most earnest faith, which he cherished for others when he could find no comfort in it for himself. These would be sufficient explanations of the interest which he has awakened in so many simple and honest readers who turn to books for sympathy and fellowship, and do not like a writer at all the worse because he also demands their sympathy with him. Cowper is one of the strongest instances, and proofs, how much more qualities of this kind affect Englishmen than any others. The gentleness of his life might lead some to suspect him of effeminacy; but the old Westminster school-boy and cricketer comes

out in the midst of his Meditation on Sofas; and the deep tragedy which was at the bottom of his whole life, and which grew more terrible as the shadows of evening closed upon him, shows that there may be unutterable struggles in those natures which seem least formed for the rough work of the world. In one of his later poems he spoke of himself as one

> "Who, tempest-tossed, and wrecked at last,
> Comes home to port no more."

But his nephew, who was with him on his death-bed, says that there was a look of holy surprise on his features after his eyes were closed, as if there were very bright visions for him behind the veil that was impenetrable to him here.

I have thus given you a few hints about the way in which books may be friends. I have taken my examples from the books which are most likely to come in our way; and I have chosen them from different kinds of authors, that I may not impose my own tastes upon other people. I purposely avoid saying anything about more recent writers, who have lately left the world or are in it still, because private notions and prejudices for or against the men are likely to mingle with our thoughts of their books. I do not mean that this is not the case with the older writers too. I think I have shown you that I have no wish to forget the men in the books—that my great desire is that we should connect them together. But if we have known any-

thing about the writers, or our fathers have known anything about them, if we have heard their acts and words gossiped about, they are not such good tests of the way in which we may discern them in their books, and learn what they are from their books. But as I began this lecture with some animadversions upon the tendency of one part of our popular literature to weaken our feeling that books are our friends, I ought to say that I am very far indeed from thinking that this is the effect which the more eminent writers among us produce. In their different ways, I believe most of them have addressed themselves to our human sympathies, and have claimed a place for their books, not upon our shelves, but in our hearts. Of some, both prose writers and poets, this is eminently true. Perhaps, from feeling the depressing influence of the *We*-teaching upon all our minds, they have taken even overmuch pains to show that each one of them comes before us as an *I*, and will not meet us upon any other terms. Many, I hope, who have established this intercourse with us will keep it with our children and our children's children, and will leave books that will be regarded as friends as long as the English language lasts, and in whatever regions of the earth it may be spoken.

It is very pleasant to think in what distant parts of the earth it is spoken, and that in all those parts these books which are friends of ours are acknowledged as friends. And there is a living and productive power in

them. They have produced an American literature, which is coming back to instruct us. They will produce by and by an Australian literature, which will be worth all the gold that is sent to us from the diggings.

American books have of late asserted very strongly their right to be reputed as our friends, and we have very generally and very cordially responded to the claim. I refer to one book now—Mrs. Stowe's "Dred," though I did not mean to notice any contemporary book at all—for the sake of certain passages in it which I think that none that have read them can have forgotten. They are those in which the authoress describes the effects which were produced upon a very simple-hearted and brave Negro—whose whole life had been one of zealous self-devotion to some white children, but who had had no book teaching whatsoever—by the stories which were read to him out of the Old and New Testaments. We are told with great simplicity and with self-evident truth, how every one of these stories started to life in his mind, how every person who is spoken of in them came forth before the hearer as an actual living being, how his inmost soul confessed the book as a reality and as *a friend*. No lesson, I think, is more suited to our purpose. It shows us what injury we do to the Book of Books when we regard it as a book of letters, and not as a book of life; none can bear a stronger witness to us how it may come forth as *the* Book of Life, to save all others from sinking into dryness and death. I have detained you far too long in

endeavouring to show you how every true book exhibits to us some man, from whose mind its thoughts have issued, and with whom it brings us acquainted. May I add this one word in conclusion?—that I believe all books may do that for us, because there is one Book which, besides bringing into clearness and distinctness a number of men of different ages from the creation downwards, brings before us one Friend, the chief and centre of all, who is called there *The Son of Man.*

II.

ON WORDS.[1]

PERHAPS it may seem to you rather a waste of words to speak at any length upon the use of words. Is not the use of words, to express our meaning? When we have said this, have we not said all that it is worth our while to say? I think not, for this reason: it is a great thing no doubt to be able to express our meaning, but it is a still more necessary thing to have a meaning. The great difference between a wise man and an unwise man is, that the one knows, and the other does not know, what he means. Anything then that will help us in the work of understanding ourselves is still more valuable than that which helps us in the work of expressing ourselves. I believe the study of words does afford us this help: that, if we know how to use them aright, they will not only supply us with convenient forms for communicating our thoughts to others, but they will actually teach us what our thoughts are, and

[1] Delivered to the students of Guy's Hospital, about 1838.

how to think. It is this use of them of which I propose to speak in my lecture to-night. Men very commonly introduce their observations on this subject by saying, that words are arbitrary signs of ideas. I do not think I quite understand this sentiment. Taking it in its largest sense, it would seem to imply, that anyone may use words just as he likes, that I might if I pleased call black white, or right wrong. But this is not a privilege which you would concede to me, or to anyone; at least it is not one of which any man in his senses would avail himself. What I suppose persons in general would understand by words being the arbitrary signs of ideas is this, that a certain number of men have agreed together to describe certain things or certain acts by certain names, and that we are now under a tacit convention not to depart from this rule. But if such an explanation as this is offered of the nature of language, those who furnish it should be prepared to show where and how this convention took place. What is there in history at all answering to it? Where was the assembly held in which Englishmen determined to speak English, and Frenchmen French? Who prescribed the terms of the bargain? How did he persuade other men to acquiesce in them? The nomenclature of different sciences may perhaps occur to you as something a little illustrating such a process. A certain learned man calls some chemical substances, for instance by certain names borrowed from ancient languages, and these names become by degrees the authorized and

habitual designation of those substances among all who belong to his school, nay, possibly among all who write or converse about chemistry. But you will see in an instant how idle it must be to apply this analogy to the origin and growth of language itself. It is one of the boasts of scientific men that such communications and mutual compacts as these could never take place but in the most advanced and artificial stages of society. The words in scientific nomenclature are expressly taken out of the ordinary stock of human expressions to be put under regulations which they have never obeyed, and to be safe from the habitual influences which act upon them. Yet even these scientific words are not arbitrary signs of ideas. When they are good for anything, when they are anything more than the Abracadabra of a *Memoria technica*, they are selected for some real or supposed appropriateness to the nature of the thing which they denote. We cannot draw any inference, then, from this instance in favour of the notion to which I am referring. And I think the more you turn over that notion in your minds, the less you will find of practical worth and utility in it. I do not say that there is not some truth lurking under it, there must be in every phrase that has gained such currency. But it is not a truth which assists us materially in examining into the nature of words, or in turning them to a good account. On the contrary, it is generally used to discourage all such attempts, and, I fear, to produce an impression that all speech, and even all thought, is

arbitrary, hollow, and insincere. There can be no worse conclusion to arrive at than this. In life and practice words are most real, substantial things. They exercise a power which we may deny if we choose, but which we feel even while we are denying it. They go forth spreading good or mischief through society. Surely there must be something solemn and deep in their nature.

Talk of "arbitrary" and "conventional" as you may, but every honest man feels that it is a sin to use words at random; and every thoughtful man feels when uttering them carefully and conscientiously that he enters into sympathy and fellowship with men who have spoken those same words generations ago. He begins to feel as they felt. He learns that men only create their words as they create the breath, which goes forth from the lungs with which God has provided them, by help of the air with which He has surrounded them. He begins to feel that in words are stored up facts which may enable him better to understand the history of mankind, and to interpret and admire the purposes of their Creator concerning them.

These remarks will clear the way for any hints which I may have to offer hereafter respecting the right method of investigating the force and application of words. But as it would be very impertinent to propose the one which I think best, without considering others which have the sanction of great names attached to them; and as at the same time it would be quite out of my

power, and very unreasonable in such a lecture as this if it were in my power, to enter into an examination of the various etymological systems which have been supported by learned men here and elsewhere, I shall preface what I have to say by a few observations on two schemes, one or other of which is likely to find favour with English students. The first I shall call, for want of a better name, the Lexicographical, the second the Derivative, or purely Etymological. These are longer words than I like to employ, and if I did not hope soon to find equivalents for them, I should not resort to them. Possibly it may give a sort of personal interest to my explanations of them, and may even contribute something to the clearer understanding of both, if I speak a little of two distinguished men who may be fairly called representative of these two schemes, and through whom most of us are likely to get our knowledge of them. The men I allude to are, Dr. Samuel Johnson and John Horne Tooke.

You are aware that it would be difficult to fix upon two persons so opposed in all their habits, tempers, and opinions, as these two. The one an old Tory, I might even say a Jacobite; the other the very best and cleverest specimen of a modern leveller. But I believe it will be found that, widely as their notions upon every possible subject differed, the feeling from which they started was the same. Both were almost equally remarkable for a keen and lively sense of the disorder and perplexity in which all human pursuits,

studies, thoughts, systems, are involved. But this feeling, strong in both, far stronger in him who despaired of all alteration than in him who abetted all—this feeling, being modified by the different characters of their minds and their different circumstances, drove them in completely opposite directions—all the irregularities and disorders which Johnson saw in the world he felt also in himself; if society seemed to him a turbulent chaos, studies an interminable labyrinth, there was a confusion in his own feelings just as endless, there were mazes in his own thoughts to which he had as little clue. Till he could harmonize himself, his discontent and his uprightness equally hindered him from attempting to set anything else in order. All schemes and theories which ingenious men have devised for reconciling difficulties and explaining anomalies, he scouted as pious frauds, and disliked, because they fretted the sores in his own soul which they could not heal. On the other hand, the facts and doctrines in which he believed that the real explanation of these difficulties lay hid, and the real consolation under the pressure of them, he would earnestly fight for, though he could not see the explanation nor receive the comfort.

All ancient landmarks, all existing forms and institutions, he clave to, because the sense of disorder in his own mind told him that they were not the causes of disorganization, and he believed they were the only hindrances to its becoming universal. A man of this

spirit could be gloomy and ferocious in his outward deportment, and yet possess a far greater fund of real benevolence than is to be found in most good-natured men.

He could also treat of every subject that came within his grasp in such a manner as to leave the reader utterly dissatisfied and scarcely wiser than before, and yet with the strongest impression that he had been in the company of a man of most vigorous and herculean powers. For what we want of an author is, that he would assist us in reconciling the thoughts of our own minds, in bringing together and uniting what had been loose and disjointed elements For this work Johnson renders us no service—he is mighty in collecting, piling up, accumulating; but disposition, proportion, and harmony, he first despaired of attaining, and at last learned to hate. He did but express his most inward and habitual feeling when he exclaimed one day, "How I wish that music were impossible!"

In John Horne Tooke the quick perception of disorder without was attended with no correspondent sense of disorder within; a more self-complacent person seems never to have existed; the perplexities he beheld in others only taught him to understand and admire his own clear-sightedness and sagacity. Troubled by no inward conflicts, overwhelmed by no feeling of a mystery around him which he could not comprehend, he had nothing to do in the world but to contemplate

and to criticize. Still, though as far as sympathy went the proceedings of the world were nothing more to him than a game of chess, he had too much talent and energy to be satisfied with the poor amusement of commenting on the players, and pointing out how much better the moves would have been if he had made them. He aspired to something more than this, for the period in which he lived was one which tempted every clever man to try his hand at system making, as well as system mending. And there was nothing to check his ambition; for he had no experience in his own mind of the complexities of human feeling, its strong currents and fierce back-eddies. Of hopes and fears, disappointed wishes, and undefinable aspirations he knew nothing, and of course believed nothing; of course, also, all those high mysteries in which these terminate and find their only satisfaction, whether verbally acknowledged or not, were mere dead letters to him. How to adjust the springs of a machine upon which none of these disturbing forces are operating, was, for a man of Horne Tooke's uncommon cleverness, a very easy work. Only consistently follow out the principle that man is not a spiritual being, that no spiritual processes go forward in his mind, or at any rate are so little important that they may be quite overlooked in a long calculation, and you will be surprised how very quickly you can run up an edifice of morals, legislation, and philosophy. Indeed, considering what trouble and expense of thought are saved by this simple expedient, it is a marvel, not that most of

our modern Babel-builders are materialists, but that a single one of them is anything else—and if men possessing a very small capital of wit and knowledge find it most profitable to invest them in this theory, we need not wonder that Horne Tooke, with his large capital, should have realized a considerable portion of fame by the same means. In the field of politics competition has considerably diminished his profits, but in Etymology, into which we shall presently see that he carried precisely the same principle, his gains have been probably very nearly commensurate with his expectations.

It is not in order to detract from the value of the Etymological researches of these great men that I have ventured to give you this sketch of their characters; but it is, that we may know exactly the assistance that we have to expect from them in a science, the main object of which is, to make us acquainted with ourselves: it is, that we may be aware of the kind of shortcoming which we are likely to find in each of them, and that when, by actual examination of the systems, we do find it, we may the better know what it means. And it is, lastly, that we may be able to reap the full benefit of their industry and talents, which I am well convinced that no one can thoroughly appreciate, or properly avail himself of, who had not in some degree emancipated himself from their systems.

The Lexicographical method, of which I consider Johnson to be the English representative, I will ex-

plain by an illustration. It shall be, if you please, the word "Property." I will extract the article entire from Johnson's Dictionary :—

"PROPERTY, N.S., from Proper.

"1. Peculiar quality :—

"'What special *property* or quality is that which, being nowhere found but in sermons, maketh them effectual to save souls?'—HOOKER, *Eccl. Polity*, 6, v. s. 22.

"'A secondary essential mode, is any attribute of a thing, which is not of primary consideration, and is called a *property*.'—WATTS.

"2. Quality; disposition :—

"'Tis conviction, not force, that must induce assent; and sure the logick of a conquering sword has no great *property* that way; silence it may, but convince it cannot.'—DR. H. MOORE, *Decay of Christian Piety*.

"'It is the *property* of an old sinner to find delight in reviewing his own villanies in others.'—SOUTH'S *Sermons*.

"3. Might of possession :—

"'Some have been deceived into an opinion, that the inheritance of rule over men, and *property* in things, sprung from the same original, and were to descend by the same rule.'—LOCKE.

"'*Property*, whose original is from the right a man has to use any of the inferior creatures, for subsistence and comfort, is for the sole advantage of the proprietor, so that he may even destroy the thing that he has *property* in.'—LOCKE.

"4. Possession held in one's own right :—

"'For numerous blessings yearly showered,
And property with plenty crowned,
Accept our pious praise.'—DRYDEN.

"5. The thing possessed:—

"'"'Tis a thing impossible
I should love thee but as a *property*.'—SHAKESPEARE.

"'No wonder such men are true to a government, where liberty runs so high, where *property* is so well secured.'—SWIFT.

"6. Nearness or right—I know not which is the sense in the following lines:—

"'Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and *property* of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee.' SHAKESPEARE, *King Lear*.

"7. Some article required in a play for the actors; something appropriate to the character played:—

"'I will draw a bill of *properties* such as our play wants.'
SHAKESPEARE, *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

"'The purple garments raise the lawyer's fees;
High pomp and state are useful *properties*.'—DRYDEN.

"'Begin then to con our part, when we are ready to be hissed off the stage, and death is now pulling off our *properties*.'—ARCHBISHOP SANCROFT'S *Sermons*, p. 101.

"'Greenfield was the name of the *property* man in that time, who furnished implements for the actors.'—POPE.

"8. *Property* for *propriety*—anything peculiarly adapted:—

"'Our poets excel in grandity and gravity, smoothness and *property* in quickness and briefness.'—CAMDEN."

Now let us inquire, what are our feelings on reading this catalogue? The first, and a most legitimate one, may perhaps be admiration of the reading and diligence which has gathered passages from so many excellent English authors, illustrating the word and furnishing

in themselves, and without reference to the immediate subject, a most entertaining study. That peculiar faculty of Johnson, to which I have already adverted, of collecting and accumulating, shines forth in this as in every page of his Dictionary; but when we have paid this reasonable tribute to genius, I cannot help thinking that another feeling will arise in our minds, which will take this form—"What," we say to ourselves, "when I use the word property in one application, is it no more like property in another application than it is like any other word in the language? Is there no common meaning, not even a bead-string to hang the different meanings upon?"

I cannot help thinking that there is something much more distressing in this notion, something in it more fatal to the sincerity of our minds, than at first we are inclined to suspect. Those who have not made the experiment for themselves of tracing out the sense of a word through its different applications, may not feel this so strongly as I do. But I think they must admit that the common-sense conclusion of anyone would be against Dr. Johnson. Anyone not told the reverse would imagine, that the word "property" which he heard on Friday in the mouth of a land-surveyor was the same word with the word "property" which he heard on Saturday in the mouth of a naturalist. It would never come into his head to imagine that the word was the same in the sound which it makes to the ear, and the letters which manifest it to the eye, but

had no other resemblance at all; and I think I may add, that he would be some time before he would be persuaded to adopt the conclusion.

This, then, is the radical vice which those who are seeking the study of words, as a means of attaining a knowledge of themselves, find in the Johnsonian method; but how is it that this method necessarily involves this vice? It involves it, first, by its indifference to derivations. The derivation of a word in Johnson is a secondary matter altogether; for form's sake a derivation is given, but almost anything will do—an English noun will be derived from a French one, which might just as well come from it, or a verb in one language is just paralleled by a corresponding verb in another. Nowhere is there an attempt to connect more than the one or two first senses of a word with the derivation—all the rest are supposed to have been so long away from their mother, and to have travelled so much in foreign parts, that they needs must have forgotten her and she them. The second and still greater hindrance to our attaining a right understanding of words, and ourselves in the use of them, while we continue tied to the lexicographical method, is the implied notion that we know a word when we know its definition. This error lies so deep, and its roots spread so wide, that I almost fear to strike at it in the middle of a lecture. But as I have no hope to find standing ground unless it be in some measure cleared away, I will endeavour to explain the

nature of my objection, leaving the vindication of it to your own judgment.

Before the time of Bacon, definitions of objects took the place of the knowledge of those objects; the great principle developed by that philosopher was this, —that nature was to be studied in nature, that we can attain no knowledge whatever by definitions, that they are merely devices for the convenience of the mind while it is engaged in its experimental labours, but do in no sense whatever supersede those labours. This doctrine, which is almost too plain for you to understand—I mean that it has so worked into our feelings that we can scarcely enter into the possibility of the opposite doctrine, or suppose that it was ever entertained—this is just the truth which Bacon had the hardest work to maintain against the logicians of his day. Now, we contend that words are entitled to the benefit of a similar doctrine—that you can no more reach the life of a word by means of a definition than you can reach the life of a chemical substance by means of a definition; that they are good and useful landmarks for the mind, while it is engaged in investigating the meaning of a word, but that they are not in any sense the meaning of it; and that he who, because he has got the definition, fancies he knows and understands that word, is practising as great a fraud upon himself as the old schoolmen practised upon themselves, when they fancied that by their endless speculations and definitions of nature they were attaining a knowledge of nature.

We have seen how remarkably the Johnsonian system exhibits that want of unity which we showed to be the characteristic of its author's mind. The possession of this merit is the great attraction of Tooke's system. His, you may remember, I called the Derivative or purely Etymological system. I called it so because, instead of giving multifarious explanations of any word in common usage which presents itself to him, he takes us at once to the root, or what he believes to be the root. In performing this work he conferred a great benefit upon our language. For, instead of allowing us to be content with merely knowing similar words in other languages, and calling these the origin of words in our own, he led us to that which is, at all events, the primitive language of us, and of many of the nations in the North of Europe. I do not mean that he was the first scholar who had attended to Anglo-Saxon; there had been many who had studied it before him, and many, I suppose, who have studied it much more effectually since. I do not know even whether he was a sound Saxon scholar; I fancy that some doubts upon this point have been raised of late years. But this is certain, that he was a devoted and exclusive one, and that he compelled Englishmen to regard a great many words as of native origin which they had been wont to trace to some classical source. This was, undoubtedly, doing a good service, and one could easily have pardoned Horne Tooke for being a little fanatical in following out his

own system, and for utterly denying the worth of classical etymologies, even when they were far more obvious and reasonable than his own. But he had another reason than this for exalting Anglo-Saxon into our sole guide in determining the force of English words. Admitting most fully that it is the mother of our tongue, yet the plain evidence of history compels us to acknowledge that it had a father as well as a mother, that the thoughts which came to us first wrapt up in the language of Rome, gave life to that which would else have been merely material and dead, and imparted to our language all its highest powers and deepest meaning. In the South, where the primitive language was weak, because the character of the people was weak, the classical principle wholly predominated. Here, and in Germany, there was a strong homely stock, which did not hinder the riper and older language from making its strength felt; nay, which enabled it to exert its strength more effectually; but which, at the same time, has given such marked and distinct features to our speech as the classical mixture has not been able in any way to obliterate.

Now of this fact Horne Tooke refused to take any cognizance. The clearness of his mind, impatient of all Johnson's generalities, led him at once to fix vigorously and determinately upon the primary elements of a word, and to say, "I am sure these are the elements of it." But the hard and material character

of his mind led him to stop there. He would admit this, and nothing beyond this. Hence he presents us with the appearance of great simplicity, and it is the simplicity of his system which makes it so popular. But unfortunately it does not explain facts; it only gets rid of facts, and those oftentimes the solemnest, the most important facts of a man's own being. Take one or two instances, which have been often noticed and exposed before, but which should be exposed again and again, because they are traps and pitfalls in the way of every fresh student. You have been used to fancy that such words as *Right* and *Wrong* meant something; that there is a right, and that there is a wrong. No conventions settled what these words should denote. No conventions can alter their force. There they are; ultimate points which men must recognize, which their consciences compel them to recognize. We want a light from above to show us the right, and warn us of the wrong; but we are obliged, if we are honest men, to believe in them, and act as if they were, at all times, and in all circumstances. But if we are to believe Horne Tooke, all this is not so. Right comes from a word signifying "that which is ordered, or ordained." So be it; I shall show you presently that much is to be learnt from this fact. But the impression which he wants to leave on your mind is this: Right being the ordained thing, the notion of an absolute right or an absolute wrong is out of the question, a mere fiction of priests and lawgivers to get

credit for their own assumptions. You must get a competent authority—which Hobbes would make the Prince of the day, which Tooke would make the popular voice—to determine what is right, and what is wrong. Perhaps you may say, if we only get *the* right authority, the Ruler of the universe, the position is of no importance. I believe even then it is of the greatest importance, because it will involve the question whether the Ruler of the universe is, according to the Pagan notion, merely a Mighty Power, or whether he is, according to the Christian notion, the Righteous Being. But even without taking this point into account, Tooke, by another of his derivations, has cut us off from this refuge. *Truth*, he says, is derived from the word *to trow;* truth means, "that which a man troweth." Absolute truth, then, like absolute right, has vanished from the region of our thoughts, and nothing is but that which seems. These are the sleights of hand by which this distinguished etymologist robs those who give heed to him of that for which all the silver and gold in the universe would be no compensation. When you hear of such doings, you may be inclined to think that his system does not only, as I said, illustrate the character of his own mind, but that it proves the essential worthlessness, nay, mischievousness, of the study to which he devoted himself. I draw just the opposite conclusion from these facts. I see in them evidence of the immense importance of the study of words. I see how thoroughly confused and false must be that notion

which treats them as mere arbitrary signs, when so much of all that most deeply concerns us is thus brought into connection with them. And it is not an imagination, but a notorious fact, that these sayings of Tooke's have produced an effect on the minds of numbers; have led numbers to think that false coins had been passed off upon them, stamped with precious names, but carrying only a conventional value, when they have been spoken to about Right and Truth, and have been told that it is to be the business of their lives to do the right, and to know the truth. I allow that there must have been an evil preparation of mind beforehand, that they must have been inclined by their moral state to disbelieve in anything fixed and real before these arguments, addressed to the intellect, could have produced any decided impression upon them. Still I believe that it is important to show them how little warrant there is for that impression in the study of words—nay, how much that study, if truly and faithfully pursued, must tend to dispel it. I think it is very important they should understand, that words do indeed bear witness to man's connection with that which is earthly and material, because he *is* so connected, and because everything which he does and utters must proclaim this truth: but that if you look them fairly in the face, they are also found to testify, and that not weakly or obscurely, of man as a spiritual being; nay, that it is impossible steadily to meditate upon the history of any single word without carrying away a

conviction that he is so, which all the materialism in the world cannot set aside.

In using this phrase *History of a word*, I have indicated that method which I believe unites the advantages of Johnson's and Tooke's, and is free from the inconveniences of both. You observed what a list of meanings Johnson gave us for the one word "property." We complained that we could find no connection between these meanings—that one seemed to stand as aloof from the other as if they were not kinsmen, or even friends. Still it is a fact which we must be thankful to Johnson for teaching us, and for illustrating by so many useful quotations, that such a variety of significations does exist. According to Tooke's method, we should at once have settled on the derivation of the word "property." We should have said that it meant "that which was a man's own." All those higher meanings of the word, which we found expressed in so many beautiful passages in old English authors, would have been brought down till they intimated nothing more than is intimated by the word in every bill of sale, or at any auction mart; and we should have been told, what is certainly true, that this is a much simpler method, and is a great saving of trouble. But the mischief is, that in this way, just as much as in the other, we get rid of facts. We lost the fact of the significations being connected in Johnson. We lose the fact of there being any signification at all, except the first, in Tooke. Now, what if the opposite

evils of these two systems, like the opposite views and dispositions of the persons who supported them, should have a common origin? I think that they have. I think their common error is, that they both alike deny the living, germinating power of words. Horne Tooke, who ties a word down to its lowest sense, Johnson, who bandages each use of a word in a separate definition, alike disbelieve in that principle which, had they acknowledged it, would have brought their methods into coincidence. If they would have stooped to the strong and irresistible evidence which the workings of our own minds, which all history, furnishes, that there is as much a vital principle in a word as in a tree or a flower, they would have understood how it was possible that the root should be a small ugly thing, and yet that it should contain in itself the whole power and principle of the leaves, and buds, and flowers, into which it afterwards expands; they would not have consented so cruelly to tie up all its rich and luxuriant shoots; they would not have thought that the blossom in its May-day fulness and beauty should renounce its connection with the root, or have believed that the root must assert its dignity by reducing to its own ignoble and unsightly shape the blossom which is its consummate glory. They would have understood, too, how the peculiar circumstances of any age, moral or political, like the influence of sun and air, of spring breezes, of mildew and of blight, may modify the form and colour of a word, may stint or quicken its growth,

may give it a full blown, coarse, material look, cause it to sicken into a pale and drooping abstraction, or strengthen it in all its spiritual sap and juices.

In using this language I am far from intending to be metaphorical. I use that language which I believe does most literally and exactly convey my meaning. The point in debate is, whether words are endued with this principle of life, the manifestations of which it is impossible in any way so truly to express as in the language of outward nature. Whether it be so or not, I repeat, is the question. To call this language metaphorical is to beg the question. I assume that it is not so, and that assumption I have rebutted, at least by some negative evidence.

You will see, I think, that a complete etymological system formed upon this idea would require more study and diligence to work it out than either that of Johnson or Tooke; but at the same time would bring in a far more rich reward to the student; for it is almost impossible to conjecture how much light would be thrown upon our national history, upon the history of our wars, arts, and manufactures, above all upon the history of our mental and spiritual progress, by an examination of the senses which words have borne at different times; of the impressions they have received from different persons; of the new applications which they have gained from different discoveries; of the changes they have undergone from different revolutions. To know through what difficulties and under

what influences our language attained strength and maturity, and how any symptoms of declension or decay, which it may now exhibit, are connected with a similar declension in our moral feelings, in our reverence for institutions, or in the vigour of our search after truth, must be very useful and important for any Englishman, especially for those who are to be in any way the guides and teachers of their brethren. But it was not in this large way that I proposed to consider the subject to-night. I speak rather of the influence it might have on our own minds; of the assistance it might be to us in acquiring self-knowledge.

Of course, even in this point of view, it would only be possible for me, and perhaps, on the whole, I might have thought it the most useful course, to offer a few hints for your guidance in carrying out such inquiries, rather than to conduct them at any length myself.

I shall, therefore, conclude my lecture with performing a few experiments on words, which, though they may be a poor substitute for the brilliant experiments on physical subjects which you may sometimes witness here, may yet help you to feel that there is a life and power in the words which you speak, as well as in the things which you handle; that within them too there lie secret and slumbering fires, for warmth or for conflagration. If we begin with that word with which we found Horne Tooke dealing so summarily, the word *Right*, we shall admit at once his assertion, that "right" means that which is ordered or ordained.

How shall we apply this in the first and lowest case of all—to that use which we make of the word when we speak of our "right" and "left" hand. Horne Tooke naturally delights in this instance. It favours his hypothesis mightily that the right hand in some countries should be the left hand in others, and he quotes with triumph the paradox of the road: "If you go to the left you are sure to go right."

But who does not feel that even here language is pointing to something fixed and certain? One nation may use this hand, and call it right; another that, and call it right. One is not a rule for the other; granted. But each alike recognizes the existence of a rule; each alike feels that there is some order and constitution of things, determining that it should be so, and no otherwise. What then do you gain by proving that the word is sometimes applied to a case in which there is no fixed invariable rule, or at least no acknowledged one? You give merely a proof of a witness in the mind that there is some standard, some invariable order, which it is wishing to detect everywhere. But this is not all. The corresponding word to *right* is not used in all countries in reference to the hand. *Dextra*, for instance, in Latin has no reference to right or wrong. And yet in every language there is some word which does betoken the feeling of right or wrong. We are, then, driven to say that we have not got the highest sense of the word. We must look to some further application of it in order to know fully what it means.

Have we got it, then, when we meet with this kind of use of it: "I have a right to that horse;" "You have no right to put me in prison"? Evidently we are on higher ground here. This sense of right points to something more than the rule which determines why we should use one hand rather than another, in throwing a quoit, or writing a letter. Here is evidently implied some rule made for me, and made for other men, which I fancy has been violated in respect to me. If you consider how these words are commonly spoken, you feel that they contain an acknowledgment, not merely that something is, but that so it ought to be; nay, that it ought to be so even if it is otherwise. But still, when we reflect on this use of the word, we feel that it cannot be the final or the highest one. You say you have this right. Does it reside in you, then? Can you assert it? If you can, why do you call upon anything else, upon any law or any higher power, to help you?

There must still be another use of the word to explain all the foregoing. And do we not light upon this application of it when I say in reference to some state of mind or character, "This is right," and of some other, "This is wrong"? In speaking thus I recognize a standard from which I must not depart —not an accidental standard, but a fixed immutable standard, one of which I am forced to say—This is the right. I do not make some claim for myself which I have no power to enforce, but I declare myself in

subjection to a law which I am bound to obey. I give this as an instance of the point which I am enforcing, that you must follow a word up into its highest sense in order to understand the lower sense of it; that, even in this highest sense, you will find it is the same word which you had before noticed in some more vulgar acceptation; and that, when you do bring it to its highest point, you will see how the conscience of mankind has been bearing testimony to the same truth to which your conscience, if you will listen to it, is bearing witness at this hour.

That word "conscience" itself is one on which we cannot meditate too earnestly. You should consider it along with the adjective, "conscious." You should consider what you mean when you say "I am conscious" of something. You should remember that it is derived from two words signifying "to know" and "together with." You must see that it implies that you know, or take account of, something which is passing within your own self. It leads us to this deeply solemn thought, that a man can not only perceive the things that are without him, but that he has eyes within, and that there is a whole world for him there to contemplate. But this is an appalling reflection if we do not pursue the thought higher, if we do not ascend from the word "consciousness" to the word "conscience," if we do not reflect that it is not our own voice merely that is speaking within, but the voice of another, the perfect Teacher, Reprover, Guide; and if we do not

believe that it is possible to ascend from the conscience of His presence into communion with His character and will.

From this word, if you please, you may pass to one which I have several times had occasion to use to-night —the word "absolute." We are not perhaps in the habit of connecting this word with the word "to absolve," though in fact it is the past participle of it. The word "to absolve" is "*to set free* from," the word "absolute" is "*set free* from." The absolute is that which is perfectly free, loosed from all restraints and limitations—that which gives the law to other things, and is a law to itself. Absolute goodness is that of which all other goodness is only the reflection. A person on earth setting himself up to be absolute is the very reverse of a free man, is generally a slave, for he has put himself into a monstrous position; he has put himself in the place of God. That which man should desire to be is, not an absolute creature, but an absolved creature; he is a freed man, not a free man. And He who is perfectly absolute, perfectly free, delights to absolve His creatures that He may bring them into that service which is the only freedom.

With the word "absolute" you may connect one which is closely associated with it in the language of the schools, the word "relation." In its primitive meaning it has the sense of carrying back; and this leading thought pervades all its other uses. Each relationship is always a reference, a carrying back, a

looking to some head, some uniting point, acknowledging it as its own necessary ground. You cannot forget what an awful commentary upon this word was supplied by the history of France, when men boasted that they would be brothers; but—forgetting that brothers are relations, that relationship means referring back, that a brotherhood implies a father—turned the fraternal hug into a death-embrace.

I wished to have taken notice of some other cases in illustration of my position, but I must have already exhausted your patience. I will, therefore, merely commend to your deep and reverent meditation one other word; it is the word "word" itself. In the first verse of St. John's Gospel you meet with the highest application which it is possible to make of human language. You hear Who it is from Whom all words have proceeded, and of Whose voice all words should be the echo. You find there that which is at once the ground and the pinnacle of all discourse, that which transfigures even ordinary converse into a mystery, and enables us to hear in the lispings of infancy the first notes of that harmony which is perfected in the songs of the Seraphim.

III.

ON BOOKS.[1]

I ASKED your President[2] whether he would rather that I spoke this evening of Books, or of Newspapers. He chose, wisely I doubt not, the subject of Books. I do not wish to compare these kinds of composition. I am not anxious to ascertain, nor should I be able to ascertain, whether the octavo and quarto, or the flying sheet, exercise most power over our age, or which exercises it best. Such an inquiry would take me more than a night, or a week, or a year; perhaps the result, when we arrived at it, would not be worth much.

There is another comparison, which seems to me far more important. Books and newspapers both exist for the sake of men. There were men before there were either books or newspapers, and if books or newspapers are ever put in the place of men, if we think more of them than of men, they will be curses to us instead of blessings. Whenever books have

[1] Delivered to the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, Nov. 1865.

[2] The Rev. D. Vaughan, of Leicester.

crushed the manhood of men, they have been taken from men. The earth has had to forget its books, that it might recover its men. When it has recovered them, they have produced books, which did not crush manhood, but called it forth, which showed what men had been, and might be.

I propose to gather together a few examples, from different parts of history, which may illustrate this remark. If they strike you as very familiar examples, if you think I am telling you a very old tale, I shall not be sorry. My business is not with new things. But I believe old facts may always be fresh, and may give out a fresh meaning, for each new generation.

I shall take you first to Egypt. You have all heard of the great Library which was once collected in the city of Alexandria. It was not gathered together by sovereigns like those who built the Pyramids. The monarch whose name is preserved in the name o Alexandria had subdued Egypt to Greece. The Greek Ptolemies ruled in it. They had the Greek passion for wisdom. They wished to make their Library a house for the wisdom of all ages; first, chiefly, for that which Greeks had contributed, which they supposed must be the best; but also for the lore of Hebrews, or any other people which could be rendered into the Greek tongue, and made available for the use of Greek readers and professors. Alexandria was full of such professors, men who could talk and write, as well as read, upon all topics in the visible and invisible world.

But neither the Ptolemies, nor the Library, nor the Professors, could prevent both Greece and Egypt from falling into the hands of a race which had not been trained among books, but amidst the hard work of camps. The Greeks could talk, but they had lost the power of doing. They could compose treatises; they could not form men. The Romans wanted what they had, and had what they wanted. They knew little of literature; they were men, and therefore they were capable of profiting by literature. Their statesmen and generals listened to the professors of Alexandria, and learnt more from them than the professors knew. The things which they disputed about seemed to the Romans real things, things which concerned their life.

There came a great change in Alexandria. There had been in it a colony of very learned Jews; the Gospel of Christ began to be preached in it; a Christian Church arose in it. There were in that Church noble, brave men, who went through great persecution for the Name which they bore. They were also learned men. They studied both Greek and Hebrew books, believing that it was for the honour of Christ that they should do so. But the Church ceased to be persecuted. The Roman Emperor professed Christianity. Alexandria, like the other cities of the Empire, had powerful bishops. Some of these thought that they should be doing good service by destroying those books in the Library which had an idolatrous character. They could not kill idolatry in that way. It grew among them-

selves, and with it grew the taste for talk and dispute which had always characterized that city. The Christian doctrines were treated as subjects for the exercise of Greek ingenuity: as subjects also for furious mobs to settle with clubs and swords. There was apparently an earnest zeal for questions of faith; but faith itself was gone. Then came a race in which it was alive. Ammon or Omar, the general of the Mahometans, believed in God, if he regarded Him chiefly as a sovereign, who was determined to sweep away idols and insincerities from the earth. The unmanly Alexandrians fell before the conquerors. But these had no special war with the Library. The story goes that Omar was asked to preserve it; that he considered a while, and then answered, "If these books of the Greeks are contrary to the Koran, they ought to perish; if they agree with it, there is no need of them." So the Library perished with the great buildings of the city. Some days, it is said, passed before all the books in it could be consumed.

This sentence may have been put into Kaliph Omar's mouth, by the story-teller, as being characteristic of the Mahometans of his day. It would not have been appropriate to the Mahometans of a later day, for they became, in some places at least, great readers and translators of books, and patrons of authors. But whether the words were spoken or not, the act of burning the Library is not, I think, one which we have need to weep over. Kaliph Omar and his soldiers could not destroy any of the great living books which

had been produced in Greece, or in any other country than Greece. They could not destroy the poems of Homer, though there were multitudes of things in them that were contrary to the Koran. They could not destroy the histories of the nations that had existed before the Koran was thought of. They could not destroy that Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures which the Koran had tried to improve, and which has lasted on, and has proved its strength, while the Koran has been proving its weakness. All that Kaliph Omar could do was to bear witness that what is not connected with the life of human beings, what discovers to us no truth of nature and no principle of God's government, what serves only to encourage pride and to feed controversy, had better cease to exist, and must cease to exist. The burning of the Alexandrian Library was the sign of much else that had to be burnt up at that time—the outside polish and refinement of the world, which had to be burnt up, that the true foundation of all politeness and refinement might be discovered. God was preparing a better and truer civilization for men than the Greek civilization had ever been; one which should be not for a few choice people, but for all manner of people. In due time, what was good and stable in the old world would be recovered; but first there was to be a new world prepared for it.

In this long story about the Alexandrian Library, I have given you a hint of what may happen when books are more thought of than human beings; when

they have accumulated, and men have been hidden. Now I will take you to a different part of the world—one in which you and I are far more interested. We will see whether that has any lesson—any more encouraging lesson—to teach us.

Just at the time when Kaliph Omar was busy in Egypt, the Anglo-Saxons in this island were undergoing a great change. They had come here as fierce pirates some centuries before; they had swept away a civilization which the Romans had established among us; they had fought fiercely with the old inhabitants; they had fought fiercely among themselves. How could such men ever learn to care for books? Divided as they were, they had in them a reverence for order. They reverenced the relations of father and child, of husband and wife; they believed that there was a great battle between good and evil, between darkness and light, going on in the earth and under the earth. They believed that the light and good would some day prevail. Before the time I am speaking of, men had come over to them from Rome and said, "The God of all has established a great family in the world; He has sent His Son to claim us all as members of it. You may enter this family. Good has triumphed over evil; the Kingdom of Light has proved itself stronger than the Kingdom of Darkness." The Saxons were slow to take in these words. They thought them well over before they accepted them. When they had accepted them they often fell back into their old ways.

But by degrees this message took fast hold of them The kings confessed a higher King than themselves. The fathers believed in a heavenly Father. England became a Christian nation. And then this effect followed almost immediately: schools sprang up. The people understood that there was a cultivation needed for the ground, and that there was just as real a cultivation needed for their own selves. Not only great men, but the humblest men, had a right to share in this cultivation. Bede was the son of a poor herdsman. Bede came to a school in Northumbria; he learnt what he could learn at that time about the stars; he became an Astronomer. He studied the force of words, and how words are bound to each other; he was a Grammarian. He studied how men reason with each other, and converse with each other; he became what we call a Logician. These studies he pursued, for he believed that there was another study, called Theology, or the study of God, to which they all ministered. And, what concerns us more, he wrote a History. He thought the deeds of his forefathers, and our forefathers, ought to be known. He composed a History, which tells us much which is true, and tells us what men thought to be true at that time, which is almost as precious to us, if we want to be truly acquainted with the minds of those from whom we have sprung. But Bede's history, and the works of another great Englishman, Alcuin, who studied at York, and taught the sons of Charlemagne, are Latin books. There is, indeed,

a beautiful story—I regard it as a most veritable story—of a young peasant, Cædmon, who wept and prayed because he was asked to compose some song at a feast, who was inspired to bring forth a poem in his own Saxon tongue about the creation of the world. I gladly own him as the ancestor of that noble race of English singers,

> "Who have walked in glory and in joy,
> Following their plough, along the mountain side."

But he was the exception to a rule. Literature had not yet become Saxon. Latin was usurping the place of the true native speech, which was taken to be fit only for boors. And then, on the other side, the manhood of the Saxon was going whilst he had been acquiring so much tameness and civility. The rulers were fancying that it was a more godly thing to be monks than kings. So the people were forgetting, as was natural, that it was a godly thing to obey. Under the name of Christianity, all the Barbarian vices—slothfulness, cowardice, indifference—were speading far and wide, and striking their roots deeply. So the lessons of the Bible about families and nations became unintelligible to them: all books became unintelligible along with that. There as need of some Kaliph Omar here, as in Egypt. The Mahometans did not come; but the Pagan Danes, or Northmen, came. They destroyed monasteries, churches, libraries. The work of two centuries seemed to be destroyed. By the middle of the ninth century, we are told, Alfred could not find a teacher south of the

Humber to give him instruction in Latin. That young prince could not read, it is said, till he had reached his twelfth year.

And I venture to think that it was well for him, and well for the land, that he could not. For if he did not study Latin, he was getting into his own heart the old songs which his Saxon forefathers loved; if he did not read books in his youth, he was learning to be a brave man. There is another school, besides that in which logic, and rhetoric, and astronomy, are taught. Alfred had to go into that school, and to sit in the lowest form in it, till his conceit and vanity were broken down in him, till he was fitted to be a true ruler of men by suffering with them. He took a first-class degree in that school of suffering and humiliation; he came out of it fit for any work. His first work was to fight. The invaders were in the land; they must be driven out of it, or be reduced to quiet subjects in the midst of it. Till that business was done no other could well be attempted. He had to do it thoroughly. Englishmen were to be taught that they were the inhabitants of an island; that the sea was to be their element, as it had been the element of their ancestors. Pirates had come upon them in ships; they must have ships to keep out piracy. Then, if they were not to be a people subject to other men's wit, they must feel that they had laws of their own; they must be made to understand that those laws were to be obeyed. Alfred brought them to this understanding. He did not make a code for them,

as we used to fancy. He did what was far better. He enabled them to understand the worth of their old Saxon customs and traditions. He led them to connect these with the commandments which had been given to the Israelites, who were to be the teachers and blessings of all the families of the earth. He trained them to feel their relationship to each other, and the responsibilities which were involved in relationships. All this was necessary before they could care again for books, or could profit by books. But the King knew that they needed these. He knew what books had become to himself since he had found out his wants, and had begun to do his work. A king taught by hard blessings that there was a higher Ruler over him whom he could trust, would have his people know what that Ruler was, and how they might trust Him: he would give them a Bible. He had looked back to his forefathers when his own condition was saddest; he would have them understand what they could of their forefathers. They should have the History which the peasant Bede had bequeathed them. If ships were going forth from this island, his people should know whither their ships had sailed, or might sail; they should have the best geography he could procure for them. He had suffered, and had wanted consolation; they should hear what consolation the brave Roman statesman Boethius had found when he was in a lonely prison expecting death. All these books Alfred gave his people, in their own tongue —in the Saxon tongue. He had no wish to disparage

the Latin, which he had studied, and which he would keep alive; but the speech of the nation ought to be dearer to them than any other; it *was* dearer to him.

Here is the starting-point of our nation's literature, and I wish you to consider the beginning well, because I believe you may find in it the explanation of all its different periods of progress or of decline. It does not begin from some learned schoolmen; it does not begin from some condescending monarch who patronizes learned schoolmen because he hopes that they will magnify him, and hand down his name to after ages: its origin is from a king who is a man of toil and sorrow, of greater toil and sorrow than even his outward history shows him to be, for he had a complaint which never ceased to torment him from his youth up, though, as he had prayed might be the case, it never kept him from any enterprise; it only made him careful of every moment of the time which might be so short. The books were needed for citizens and men; those who did not care to be citizens and men would not care for them.

It was a glorious dawn of literature and of civilization which shone upon England in the time of Alfred. It was again to be clouded over; the Saxons were once more to lose their strength and manliness; once more to lose their sense of obedience, and their sense of freedom. Kings grew feeble; nobles grew ambitious and dangerous; priests thought that they were sent into the world, not to be the servants of all, but the masters of all. Another set of Northmen must come to restore, by

seeming to destroy. But now they were not Pagan Northmen, not barbarous pirates. The Normans of the eleventh century had become Christians, without losing their own love of enterprise. They were the strongest people, the most fit to govern; on the whole they were also the most educated people of that time. They conquered the Saxons. It could not be otherwise: all subsequent generations may rejoice that it was so. The tribulation was sore, the discipline was tremendous. If there had been no one to regulate it but the Norman kings, it would have been intolerable; but then the Norman kings were only instruments in the hands of a wiser and more gracious Ruler. They were able to teach law and obedience to those who had forgotten law and obedience; they were able to make men, who had mistaken lawlessness for freedom, understand what freedom is by feeling what bondage is; and they were able to give Englishmen books—Latin books, it is true, like those which had proved insufficient for their fathers, but still books of English history; books which are especially valuable because they connect the general life of England with the life of some particular neighbourhood, some monastery which was set down in the midst of one of its counties. Moreover, the Saxon tongue was not dead: it was driven out of the law-courts by the Norman French, it was driven out of the schools by the Latin. It was still written by some who were preserving the chronicle of Saxon suffering; it was still spoken at the hearths of the people. And the

people, though stripped of their lands, were acquiring a new kind of power; they were becoming manufacturers. They were getting charters from their Norman kings: they were beginning to form the corporations of towns. In due time, when there were men who wanted a native tongue, when it could be again the speech of free citizens and free men, it would come forth purified, expanded, strengthened, to be an English language, to be the organ of an English literature.

The different steps in the development of this language, how it incorporated into itself both the French and the Latin which were dwelling beside it, what changes of structure it underwent; these are points which I leave philologers to discuss. I pass over to its first essays, and to the very interesting question how these were connected with the growth of our English Constitution, especially with that wonderful step in their growth, the appearance of a House of Commons, to represent the freeholders of the counties and the freemen of the towns. I must only stop to notice how important the reign of Edward III. and the war with France, which wrought so many calamities on both nations, are in this respect. The war taught the King and his nobles, who had vaunted of their Norman descent, to claim the name of Englishmen, and so to claim kindred with the Saxons who fought in the ranks. At no time was there more disposition in these nobles to be proud of their birth; proud to call themselves knights and gentlemen. It was an

especial blessing, therefore, that the very ambition of the King should in this way compel them to appeal to the sympathies which they had in common with all classes of their countrymen.

I allude to this point because it is very closely connected with the history of English books, and especially of a book which was to give an altogether new start to our literature, and which was to exercise a mighty influence upon all the after-stages of it. John Wycliffe was an Oxford school-man; he had struggled for the rights of his University against the Italian friars who, he thought, were invading them, and were obtaining a preponderating influence there. In the course of that conflict he acquired more and more dislike to the teaching of the friars generally as representatives of a foreign Bishop, more and more of a native English feeling. That feeling made him the champion of the rights of the sovereign against those of the ecclesiastics. Had he stopped there, he might have ended with being a serviceable courtier of Edward III.; but he was not to stop there. He was to become a teacher of the English people, from whom he had sprung. I need not tell inhabitants of Leicestershire that he became identified with the country life of England, that the Oxford scholar passed his last days in Lutterworth.

The books which he wrote, so far as they were merely controversial books denouncing his opponents, may have some value for the ecclesiastical reader; but I should not care to notice them here; they would have

left no stamp upon subsequent times, whatever they might have done for his own. But the book by which he really spoke to the hearts of the English tradesmen and farmers was his translation of the Bible. This was not an attack upon friars, but a living substitute for their legends and fictions. It was written in letters, but it came to the English citizens like a voice which was speaking to them rather than as something which was to be spelt out. It spoke to them as men busy in handicrafts, as men who had the earth to till and subdue. It spoke to them as husbands, fathers, citizens. It spoke to them as men, as having that in them which united them to the doctors and the nobles; to people in the times of old, to people in the farthest corners of the earth. As a mere translation, it is of only secondary value, for it is taken from the Latin. The worth of it lies in its English; it has fixed the language, it has become a ground of the literature. No other book could have been that—no book which did not address itself directly to the people, no book which did not come with an authority. I do not mean with an ecclesiastical or state authority—the ecclesiastics and the King forbade the reading of it—I mean with the authority which the people of Judæa felt when they stood about the mount, and One opened His mouth who spake to them, not as a scribe, but as a King.

It was in the days of Wycliffe as it had been in the days of Alfred. This Book could not come forth as an English book for the English people without calling

forth other books. The sentence attributed to Kaliph Omar was again shown to be entirely inapplicable to our Scriptures. The earliest poetry belongs to the same age with Wycliffe's Bible. Chaucer was possibly the friend of Wycliffe—certainly shared many of his sympathies and antipathies. He loved the priest, or, as he was called, the secular priest, who went among the people, and cared for them as his fellow-countrymen; he intensely disliked the friars, who flattered them and cursed them, and in both ways governed them and degraded them. His education had been different from Wycliffe's, his early poetical powers had been called forth by the ladies and gentlemen of the court. He mingled much French with his speech, as they did; he acquired from them a kind of acquaintance with life which Wycliffe could not obtain in the Oxford schools. Had he remained under their influence he might have been merely a very musical court singer; but he entered into fellowship with common citizens. He became a keen observer of all the different forms of life and society in his time—a keen observer, and, as all such are, genial, friendly, humorous, able to understand men about him by sympathising with them, able to understand the stories of the past by his experience of the present. Without being a reformer like Wycliffe, he helped forward the Reformation by making men acquainted with themselves and their fellows, by stripping off disguises, and by teaching them to open their eyes to the beautiful world which lay about them.

Chaucer is the genuine specimen of an English poet—a type of the best who were to come after him; with cordial affection for men and for nature; often tempted to coarseness, often yielding to his baser nature in his desire to enter into all the different experiences of men; apt through this desire, and through his hatred of what was insincere, to say many things of which he had need to repent, and of which he did repent; but never losing his loyalty to what was pure, his reverence for what was divine. He is an illustration of the text from which I started. The English books which live through ages are those which connect themselves with human life and action. His other poems, though graceful and harmonious, are only remembered, because in his "Canterbury Tales" he has come directly into contact with the hearts and thoughts, the sufferings and sins, of men and women, and has given the clearest pictures we possess of all the distinctions and occupations in his own day.

We must always remember—in this day the recollection is especially needful—that these great English books were brought forth when there were no printing presses. The discovery of printing is a very grand one; nothing that has been said of it is worthy of its importance. But we shall not estimate its worth if we do not reverence words more than the mere letters which express them, and the letters more than the mere blocks by which they are spread abroad with such unspeakable rapidity. If all the machinery should

continue, and we should have nothing to express by it, if we should have all opportunity for uttering thoughts, and there should be no thoughts to utter, we may become miserably poor in the midst of our treasures. If we would understand what printing has done for books, we must understand first what makes books of worth—why men can care to distribute them, or to read them. Moreover, if you would do true honour to the invention of printing, you must think not first of its enormous achievements, but first of the men in whose minds the thought of it arose—of all their toil and sorrow before they brought their thought into any shape, of all the material difficulties which hindered them from making it available for others. You must go into the workshop of Guttenberg, or Faust, and look if you can at that more wonderful workshop, the brain and heart of the labourer. You will find there things good and evil; a light seeming to dawn on him which he is sure has come from some high source, and which is to bring great blessings to men; pride that he should receive it, mean suspicions of his fellows; eagerness to have the credit of the idea, anger that some one else should have a share in it. A history, sad often, and also bright, is this of discoveries, but leading at last to the conclusion that no piece of machinery could ever come into existence if there were not a spirit to devise it, and work it out; that inventions appear just when they are wanted; that the men who give them to us deserve all honour for them, and yet that we cannot

easily tell, and ought not to be able to tell, which has most to do with the gift, because it is in very deed a gift of God to man, and the best and wisest are only instruments in imparting it.

Through whatever hands it came, the gift did come; and from that time we begin to speak of books in the modern sense. Still, I believe we shall not find that this modern sense makes any difference, even the slightest, in our principle. The same law which applies to the MSS. in the Alexandrian Library applies to the printed books in the Vatican or the British Museum. Books rise and fall, live and die, by the same law in the reign of Queen Victoria as in the reign of King Alfred. Take a few instances drawn from the times after the invention of printing. The fifteenth century, to which it belongs, was, what we call, the century of the Revival of Letters. Not that letters had ever died. The books of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries on morals, metaphysics, logic, and on physics, distract us not by their lack of thoughts, but by the multitude of their thoughts. But people had become weary of what seemed so far from human life. Then Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks. The Greek scholars spread themselves abroad in the West of Europe. They brought with them the old histories and poets of Greece which they could interpret. The men of the West, the merchants of Italy, who were full of life and enterprise, could understand them and delight in them, as well as in the Greek

statues which exhibited the beauty of the human form and countenance. At the same time Italians, and many besides them, began to say that the old Latin, which had been spoken in the days when Rome was in its glory, had been forgotten, and a very barbarous language substituted for it. This pursuit of the old Latin and Greek books is what bears the name of the Revival of Letters. Some think it was altogether for the good of Europe, some think it introduced a great amount of heathenism. I think that it was good, because God ordained it, because the time was come when these old languages and old books were wanted; because the language and the books which had been accepted as good for some centuries had lost their hold upon the hearts of men, and could not help them any more. But the fine people in Europe did unquestionably fall back in their hearts into the old Heathen worship, and they would have done it much more if there had not been a set of common people, of plain human beings, who wanted something altogether different from that.

Englishmen did not share much in this movement; they were too much occupied. It was the time of our terrible civil war. English boys, however, began to profit by the new learning. Our great schools of Winchester and Eton were set up at this time; there youths learnt the force of words, the laws which we are obliged to obey in the use of them. They were by degrees to become acquainted with the great poets of the old world, to understand that what was spoken centuries

before, if it expressed the thoughts, even the perplexed thoughts, of human beings, might instruct them and quicken them. A book which belongs to these times bore the same witness. There had been a dream in the minds of Britons of a King Arthur, who had fought the battles of the land, and of the Christian Church, against the Saxon invader. The traditions of him were all vague and uncertain; but they embodied the idea of a king who was such as a king ought to be—struggling hard, bringing others around him to live with him and work with him, trained by suffering, disappointment, desertion; failing upon earth, certain to have a life somewhere else which should affect the earth. These traditions were connected with our own soil. They combined themselves with thoughts of Christian chivalry, which had belonged to the very people whom Arthur had fought against; they pointed to a King who must have greater sympathies with men than Arthur had, who must have a perfection which he could not have. These legends were gathered up in the midst of that dark, wicked time of the civil wars. A shadow might be cast upon them from the sins of that time. But they showed that men could never cease to aspire, and hope, and believe in something better than they see. They exercised a great influence over the poets who lived in the time of Queen Elizabeth. They never proved their might more, nor produced greater fruits, than they have done in the reign of Queen Victoria.

This was the picture of an imaginary *King.* Not long after there appeared the picture of an imaginary *Commonwealth.* It was written in Latin, and was called the "Eutopia;" or, the Good Place, the Good Reign. But it was written by an Englishman, a very honest, brave, learned, and graceful Englishman. It was the work of a lawyer, one of the best of English lawyers; though it was written about a place that never existed, it laid bare corruptions that did exist, corruptions that were passing under Sir Thomas More's eyes, in his own country. Like a good man, he spoke most of the evils of his own profession, those which he knew best and had most to do with—the bribery, and denials of justice, from which his own hands were quite pure. But he also exposed the evils which he saw in the Church of his days; he spoke plainly and severely of its need of reformation. Nevertheless, when the Reformation came in his age, Sir Thomas More did not like it. He would have heartily supported one which had been managed by scholars and accomplished men; he did not sympathise with one which appealed directly to the sympathies of common men, suffering from the miseries of the world, and of their own sins. The brave Sir Thomas More would have checked such a Reformation as that by any means; he rather died on the scaffold than in any way sanction it. I should be ashamed not to feel a great reverence for him. It is strongest when I think him most wrong. But neither he, nor the best, nor the worst man could stop that which was necessary for the life of

nations and of men. It was not in the power of divines to turn the current in their way, nor of monarchs to turn it in their way. Both did their best, and both failed. There was a power at work which they could not counteract. They could not hinder the German people from reading the Book which Luther translated for them; they could not hinder that Book from giving a new form and power to the German language, and a new direction to the thoughts of its people; and they could not hinder the English from having the same Book given to them, not any longer as a mere translation, like Wycliffe's, from the Latin, but from the tongues in which it was written. The Revival of Letters had done this for the people. The learning which the scholars would have kept to themselves, and for their own glory, had found its chief result in the wisdom and consolation which it ministered to the common wayfarer.

Again the old lesson was brought home to men. This Book could not, as Kaliph Omar thought that his sacred book might, swallow up other books; it must beget books; it must call forth a literature. The period of the Reformation is the period from which books in the native tongues, books speaking to the hearts of men as men, and not to mere learned men—books which a nation can claim as its own—may be said fairly to commence. We have had our full share of the blessing. Our greatest poets, Shakespeare and Spenser, are the children of the Reformation. The historical plays of Shakespeare could never have been produced in any

time before the age of Queen Elizabeth. They express the national spirit which was awakened in that age. They show how Englishmen were feeling their relation to their forefathers, their interest in the land before they came into it. And the poet himself learned to understand the chronicles of his country by mixing with the citizens of his country. He knew what they must have been in the days of Henry IV. by what they were in his own day; he knew what Roman citizens must have been in the days of Julius Cæsar in the same way. He could understand Frenchmen, Italians, Spaniards, and see their different peculiarities; for that man is most just, on the whole, to every other nation, who has the strongest feeling of attachment to his own. And Shakespeare was dwelling in the midst of a nation which was struggling for its existence against powers that would have swallowed it up. Again, I believe that in no time but one in which men had been mightily occupied, as they were at that time, with the struggles of the conscience, with the sense of moral evil, could such a play as that of Macbeth have been written. The dagger which the king saw before him when the murder was to be done, the spot which his wife could never get out of her hands after it was done, these are testimonies to the battle of light and darkness in a man, and to the terrible retribution when the darkness has prevailed, which one finds in no later works. Having once been written, they may teach us always.

Edmund Spenser, in his "Faery Queen," shows how a

cultivated and refined man, mixing with all the graceful statesmen and scholars of his time, was influenced by the same causes. If I spoke to you at all of him I should soon weary your patience, for I could not speak briefly; I have so much regard and affection for him. I only mention him as one of the most remarkable instances that great poems are composed not in easy, lazy times, but when there is most work doing, and when there are the most strong and energetic men to do it. Spenser was fond of allegory. If he had lived in a leisurely age he might only have been an inventor of conceits and allegories. But he was a patriot; he visited Ireland and saw its miseries; he loved his queen; he dreamed of a more glorious queen than she had ever been. So, whether his book is called an allegory or not, it tells of real and not sham fights, fights in which you and I are engaged. When we read him, we need not trouble ourselves much about Fairy-land. Here, in this land, amidst our own hills and valleys, in the streets of that city where Spenser was born and died, in the streets of every English town, we shall find plenty of evil enchanters, and also divine helpers who can overcome them for us all. The same lesson I believe might be drawn, if I had time to draw it, from the history of our Civil Wars in the seventeenth century. Literature had been a profession in the reign of James I., a court luxury in the reign of Charles I. Then came a tremendous conflict. All the passions, all the hopes, that had been slumbering in men's hearts were awakened. To these we owe some of the noblest

inspirations, in verse and prose, which stir the hearts of Englishmen in this day. They came from men of the most opposite opinions. We owe Jeremy Taylor, the prince of Royalists and Episcopalians, Milton, the grandest of the Puritans and Republicans, to the faith which the Civil Wars enkindled in both, to the sufferings which both endured. And the man who was better known to the people of England than either of these, the man who has expressed the deepest anguish and the highest hopes, John Bunyan, owes the power which he has exercised, first no doubt to the reality of his own inward struggles, but much also to the prison at Bedford in which he dreamed his true dream.

I am far here from meaning to say that all good books must have this origin. The books which we connect most with the early part of the eighteenth century bear few marks of suffering; in general they express ease and equanimity. They would not be true representations of the men who wrote them, or of the life of that time, if they had been otherwise; for, just as much as any to which I have alluded hitherto, they were not mere books, but faithful exhibitions of life—of a life not very elevated, somewhat frivolous, but belonging to Englishmen and English women, and therefore deserving to be studied by English men and English women. And if Addison and Steele in the "Spectator" show us this side of life, Johnson in his "Rambler" and his "Rasselas" shows us the very opposite—a hard wrestling to maintain existence and reconcile

difficulties; discontent, and yet courage and patience to endure, and hope for something better, if he could not see clearly what it was. These writers and many more help us to understand that time; what it was in itself, and what it was to bring forth. Besides these, there were a number of mere book-makers, who had no sense of the sacredness of words, who thought they might use them as they liked for any mercenary or spiteful purpose. These are they whom Pope describes in his "Dunciad," who might have introduced such a reign of dulness and darkness as he predicted at the end of it, if there had not been other powers at work than theirs, if earnest and tremendous questions concerning the existence of men and nations had not arisen, which required another satisfaction than that which these books or any books could give.

Mr. Wordsworth complains in one of his Sonnets that the French Revolution, unlike our English Civil Wars, was barren alike of books and men. I do not know whether he could have justified that assertion as far as France is concerned. I am sure that an assertion of the most opposite kind would be true if we look at the effect of that Revolution and of the wars which followed it upon other nations, especially upon our own. We owe, I conceive, to the thoughts which it engendered many men and many books. The poet who wrought that change is an illustration of my meaning. He found an artificial diction established among poets, which concealed, as he judged, poverty of

feeling and thought; he endeavoured to show, and he did show most effectually, that thoughts in which all human beings have an interest may be best expressed in simple, manly English speech. He exaggerated, most would say, the worth of the speech of peasants above all other speech. But the exaggeration was a sign that he had been born into an age which was meant to assert the superiority of that which is essentially and universally human, to that which is merely distinctive of particular classes. That was the fruit which he, a loyal Englishman deeply attached to the institutions of his soil, derived from the levelling doctrines of the Revolution. He rejected them utterly so far as they led him to scorn the past, or throw away one blessing which it had left us. He would not reject the great truth which was hidden under all their wildness, and which sober Englishmen could turn to the best account, that there is a priceless grandeur in every human being, and that neither literature nor society can exist unless they confess that grandeur and seek to awaken the sense of it. I cannot doubt that the books which have acted most upon our generation, from whatever quarters they have come, have derived their force mainly from the practical witness which they have borne to this truth. I do not believe that the interest which we have taken in Scott's poems, or Scott's novels, was owing chiefly to their exhibition of great knights and noble personages, though no doubt this has contributed to their fame. I believe the

genial sympathy which he showed with the Scotch people, his Jeanie Deans and Edie Ochiltree, have been the real and permanent strength of his works. To these we turn with ever fresh pleasure; and it is a consolation to reflect that so much genial sympathy with human beings could have existed in a man writing during the faded and artificial days of the Regency, sharing in the favours of the Regent, and commending himself to the affection and interest of the society which was most affected by the vanity and frippery of that time. A seed of better life was kept alive in that society, to germinate and bear fruit, one hopes, hereafter.

These seeds were not a little stifled by a set of stories which succeeded Sir Walter Scott's, and which bore the name of Fashionable Novels. Most persons of my age will remember them. I trust they are long since extinct, and have no influence whatever on the present generation. They address themselves to that most vulgar of all feelings, our wish to know what is going on among a set of people somewhat above our own level, that we may if possible catch some of the most insignificant parts of their behaviour, and mimic their luxuries. To these have succeeded the Sensational Novels, which minister to another kind of desire, the desire to be startled with events and combinations of events which are never likely to happen,—there being nothing, it would seem, in the actual world of human beings, or in the world of nature, which can cause us any wonder.

There are some admirable writers, female writers especially, who have supplied our best antidote to such morbid excitements. They have lifted the veil which conceals from us the struggles and sufferings of those whom we are meeting every day; they have shown us something of the hearts of those whom we only knew by their want of the good things upon which we pride ourselves. There is nothing sensational in such revelations; but they may be more terrific, and more cheering, than all fantastic enormities ever were. One such writer has just gone from us, and will be long remembered by those who know that her Mary Bartons and her Libbie Marshes describe what she knew, and express inward, not fictitious, sympathies. I am sure she rejoiced once, and must still rejoice, that she made a few persons understand better the condition of a great English town—forgive the offences and sins, and honour the manliness and womanliness, of those who toil and groan in it; and that she was never tempted to seek a temporary and mischievous reputation by catering to the appetites of any of her sex or ours who prefer sentiment to humanity, falsehood to truth.

Sir Walter Scott has also kindled a healthy desire among us for real histories, not merely historical novels. The demand has been met by many authors, whose patient industry as well as their power of exhibiting acts, and the sources of acts, surely promise that they shall live. Charles Lamb said in one of his exquisite essays, that there were some histories written in the

last age which cannot be called books at all. They were merely the pasteboard covers, lettered "History of England," or "History of the World," which careful librarians put into their shelves when their books are absent. Some of the Histories that our age has produced are books in the truest sense of the word. They illustrate great periods in our own annals, and in the annals of other countries. They show what a divine discipline has been at work to form men; they teach us that there is such a discipline at work to form us into men. That is the test to which I have urged that all books must at last be brought; if they do not bear it their doom is fixed. They may be light or heavy, the penny sheet or the vast folio; they may speak of things seen or unseen; of Science or Art; of what has been or what is to be; they may amuse us or weary us, flatter us or scorn us; if they do not assist to make us better and more substantial men, they are only providing fuel for a fire larger, and more utterly destructive, than that which consumed the Library of the Ptolemies.

IV.

ON THE USE AND ABUSE OF NEWSPAPERS.[1]

I AM going to speak of the use and abuse of Newspapers. Do not let this title mislead you. Do not fancy that I mean to tell you of some newspapers which are doing good to the community, and of some which are doing evil. Do not suppose that I have some scheme of a newspaper in my head which would be useful to you and to the world, and which would not be capable of abuse. There may be great differences in the newspapers which are in circulation, daily or weekly, through England; but I never met with one which I did not think might be abused to bad purposes, or which I did not think might be turned to some good purpose if we knew how. I may have dreamed of a perfect newspaper, as I may have dreamed of a perfect physician, or lawyer, or divine; but I never saw one, nor expect to see one. I believe if I tried to produce one according to my notions, it would have all the defects of those that exist now, and perhaps none of their merits.

[1] Delivered about 1848, in South London.

Understand, then, that I do not come among you for the purpose of praising, or censuring, newspaper writers or newspaper editors. They would care little for my praises, and profit little by my censures. Probably there are none of them here; and I would rather speak to those who are here of what concerns them. You and I read newspapers. It is not of so much importance to us to inquire whether we might have some better food than we have, as to consider how we may make the most of what we have, how we may counteract what is poisonous in it, and bring out what is nourishing. Roger Bacon is said to have trembled when the might of gunpowder was made known to him, and to have suppressed the discovery. Which of us would think now of complaining that it had been discovered, and that the system of our wars has been altogether changed by it? Which of us thinks it safe to forget that there is an explosive force in gunpowder, and that children should not play with it? Every newspaper declares that it possesses a mysterious and tremendous power; nearly every newspaper warns us that its rival and contemporary turns that power to mischief. We have need, therefore, to be on our guard. Let us try, if we can, to turn this power against our enemies, the enemies of our country, the enemies of each one of us. Let us try that it may not undermine, and extinguish, that which is most dear and precious to us.

I am going to speak first of the *use* of newspapers. Again I must remind you that I do not mean of some

one particular newspaper, but of that kind of literature which we find in any newspaper that we take up. I will show you how sincere I am in this profession by the course which I shall follow in treating the subject. There is a great difference of course in the ability with which the leading articles in different papers are written; those leading articles are written in support of different opinions and parties. But I shall not speak first of the leading articles; I shall mention the other contents of the papers before I come to them, and, when I do come to them, what I shall say will not be to fix your thoughts upon the cleverness of this argument or the stupidity of that, upon the public spirit which is displayed by those who support one cause, and the want of patriotism in those who support another. What I say will have equal reference to Whigs, and Tories, and Radicals, to those who maintain one ecclesiastical maxim or another, to those who write most carefully and ably, or most loosely and feebly.

Perhaps you will think that there is one side of the paper, one sheet in some journals, which I may pass over without notice—that which contains the Advertisements. I am far from claiming that privilege. I believe we may make great use of these advertisements, and *that* not merely when we want to find a place, or a person to fill it; not merely when we have got something to sell, or when there is something we need to buy; not merely when there is some friend of ours going out in a ship, or coming in by one; but when we

have no special occasions for which we turn over the columns in that strange miscellany, when we merely let our eyes wander, as we sometimes do, over houses and servants and shops and vessels and books, without knowing very well what we are looking for; just as we might watch the queer forms in the fire in the dusk of the evening. It is a curious and motley assemblage; that at least we must feel,—a great heap and chaos of things, that are somehow helping to make up this world in which we are dwelling. Might not we stop just for a moment or two to think of that, to recollect what a number of wants and wishes are set down here, and what a number of persons are trying, each in his own way, to gratify them? Before any, the shortest of these advertisements, was taken to the office of the newspaper, and the three or five or six shillings paid for it, how much may have passed in the mind of the advertiser! Take, for instance, the simplest case of a cook or a housemaid wanting a place. I will not choose the opposite case, and enlarge on all the doubts and perplexities of a master or mistress parting with a servant and looking out for a new one, though that might open curious chapters in domestic history. I would speak rather of those anxious, terrible moments, they may be, when a poor man or woman, who knows of no other honest way of getting a livelihood but this, and perhaps has a mother and sisters dependent upon earnings to be got in this way, tries one family after another, and then, as a last resource, determines to run the risk of "the

paper." Think of all that has gone before this, and of all the waiting for news after it; the uncertainty about the letter to A.B. or C.D. at the post-office, the hope of some particular place which looks very promising, but which happens to have been filled up the day before. Bring before yourselves just a few of the disappointments, and wearinesses, and temptations, that have come to some three or four out of the numbers that are stating their wants day after day, and I believe you will have already got some use out of the newspaper. For is it not a most useful thing to know a little more about our fellow-creatures, and the great or the little things which are occupying or disturbing them? If you had a map of London spread out before you, or if you looked down upon it from the top of St. Paul's, or of the Colosseum in the Regent's Park, you would not have such a panoramic view of the streets and houses as you have in a large sheet of advertisements. *There* you see the outsides of the houses and some indistinguishable figures walking about in the streets; *here* you have a glimpse into the insides of them, some little hint of what these people are walking about for, of some of the thoughts that are going on in their hearts. *That* I think is a far more wonderful thing. And there is this advantage in the way we arrive at our knowledge. We cannot gratify a little, petty, prying, vulgar curiosity about the circumstances or the schemes of our neighbours. We do not know who these people are, most of them, who are wanting this thing or that. The shopkeepers, indeed,

who are advertising their goods, put out their names very plainly and in large letters, that we may know where to look for them. But all those notices, which contain so much of secret history, only tell us of *some* fellow-citizen, *some* fellow-creature of ours, not who he is, or any gossip about him; so that what we learn from these records when they are put together is, that we are threads in a very complicated web, or, to use another comparison, that we are parts of a puzzle, in which one piece might fit into the other if each that has need of something could just find out the other who has that something to supply. That is one view of the case, but then there is another; that we are not threads, or bits of wood after all, that we are human beings, with all kinds of sorrows and joys, and contradictions and sins, with a sense of being very little even when we are most trying to be great, and with the sense of having something very great, and mysterious, and immortal, about us even when we are doing very little things; so that there may be earnestness and passion enough in us sometimes to move a world, while we are spending our time about a looking-glass or a ribbon. Therefore, if we consider these advertisements well, we find that people could not be made to fit into each other even if each man who had something to sell found the man who had exactly that to buy; if the woman who was wanting to be a housekeeper found the person who desired exactly such a housekeeper as she was; that there must be something else than this to bind us together, and

make us live together and work together, as men are meant to do. Looked at in this way, the sheet of Advertisements seems to me, in spite of the multitude of odd trifles of which it is composed, a very serious document indeed. In different moods it might make one laugh or cry. But possibly it might make us do what is better than either—might remind us that, after all, we do not want the greater part of the things which these advertisers want, that we can do very well without *them;* but that there are some things which we do want, all of us, which we want each for himself, and which we want that we may live as if we belonged to a society, and not as if we were a set of different grains of dust, making up a heap of dust which any strong wind will blow hither and thither.

This conviction, I think, will be brought more home to us if we do not leave this sheet of the paper till we have glanced at one corner of it; at least, I think it is there generally that one finds the Births, Marriages, and Deaths. I suppose one turns to these, thinking it just possible that some friend whom we know may be in one of the lists; very likely indeed that we may find one in the last. But if that should not be so, if no familiar name should occur as a new father or mother, as a bridegroom or bride, as one whose house on earth knows him no more,—yet simply to have this memorial of people we never saw or heard of set before us day after day in the midst of all these houses and shops, these chairs and tables and millinery, is very striking and

affecting. Into a world full of these varieties are those little creatures born who understand nothing of any of them, and yet who belong to a race which is meant to have dominion over them all. What is to become of that little immortal? How is it to make its way in the midst of all these things? How is it to find out the secret of its own destiny and parentage? Some of these things may be for the use perhaps of that couple who are just married. They may have been buying dresses, and fitting up a house. Are these the things upon which they depend to make their home a cheerful one, a place of peace and not of strife? Or have they some better security than that, some union between themselves that is not caused by the presence of these things, and will not disappear if they all depart? From that man and that in the other column they have departed. He is stripped bare of *them*, at all events. What is there left to him? These are the sort of questions that may come into our minds; and surely a newspaper may be of mighty use to us if it suggests them. There is no need of long moralities about these records. They often spoil the effect of the plain words "*born* on such a day, *married* at such a church, *died* at such an age." The moral is not in our words, but in the facts. If we take those in, we shall understand how much greater the common things of the world are than the rare things, how much greater those things are which concern rich and poor, lazy people and working people equally, than those which one has and another is

without; though it is of these that in our folly we take the most account.

Well, then, we have done with this sheet of Advertisements. Let us turn to some of the other contents of the paper. Here I observe a Police report. That used to be a very favourite part of the paper, one that some editors took great pains to make attractive. If I told you why, I am afraid I should be coming too soon to the second division of my subject; I should be beginning to speak of abuses. But I am satisfied there is a use in the Police reports, and my present business is with that. The very name *police* is worth thinking about. It comes from a word that means a city. It is one of the same family of words with *policy* and *politics*. Whenever you see a policeman you know that you belong to a city, that there is a certain order established in that city, that there is a Government over it, that there are agents for finding out wrong-doers, that there are persons to enforce the laws which the wrong-doers break. The Police, such as we see them in the streets of London, are of recent date. Most of us can remember when they came into existence, under the first administration of the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel. But the Police Courts go back to a far older time than that; and without some attempt at a Police there could be no City of London, or Borough of Southwark. These are general considerations, forming one part, though a small part, of what we call Politics. The Police reports of the newspapers apply these generals to special cases.

There you have not rules and maxims about thieving, but the actual person who is accused of thieving brought up to answer for himself. It is very good and useful to be reminded that all mere rules, all that we read of in books, have to do with flesh-and-blood human beings. Yes, it is good to be reminded of this, even when we have to connect these human beings with crimes and with punishment. That surely does not make us feel less that they belong to our race, that they are of our kindred. It sets us upon thinking how many temptations every man and boy-vagabond is exposed to that we are not exposed to, and what we might have done if these had been acting upon us — if we had been left to ourselves, or left to even worse guides, if there are worse, than ourselves. That sermon I believe a Police report may preach to us very powerfully. But if we listen to it truly, the sermon will not make us fall into sentimental regrets that the man or the boy was detected in his evil and is punished for it. It is a good thing for every man to be detected in his evil. It is a dreadful thing for us to escape detection; and it is bad, if we are detected, for us not to be reminded that punishment is an immeasurably better thing than crime, not for society only, but for the man who suffers it. It cannot cure him of the evil out of which the crime came, but it says to him, "There it is, in you. This is to remind you of it, this is to tell you that you must and can have the evil taken out of you, however close it is to you."

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All this I might have got as well perhaps from another part of the paper which is generally longer than that containing the Police reports; I mean the reports of some of the trials in the Old Bailey, the Queen's Bench, and the other Courts of Law. But these are not so homely. The counsel for the plaintiff or defendant make long speeches, which one does not always understand, and which sometimes seem to embarrass the matter rather than to make it clearer. And besides, so many of these causes, especially those that are reported at the greatest length, have more to do with questions of property between man and man, where neither party need be very wrong, though one or both may be, than with great and manifest offences. It is another kind of learning, therefore, that I think we get from these reports about the Queen's Bench, and the Common Pleas, and the Exchequer Court, and the Chancery Court, and the Rolls Court.

They belong to our country's history. Westminster Hall places us in the midst of our old Norman kings. It reminds us that they brought over with them another language than that which our ancestors had spoken, and made that the language of our Law Courts. It reminds us that though they did us this harm, and gave us this sign of conquest and subjection, we yet owe it to them, in a great degree, that Law and Government did establish themselves among us. They were great tyrants, but they were instruments in God's hands for setting up that which is the great check upon *all* tyranny, that

which is a bit in the mouth of every man who tries to make might into right, and to trample upon those beneath him. These laws, and these different courts, grew up to meet different occasions. Sometimes they owed their existence to wisdom, sometimes to an accident or blunder; sometimes to good men who were standing up in defence of what was right and true, sometimes to bad men plotting against each other; sometimes to violence, sometimes to those who resisted violence by wit or by courage. But there has been something deeper than all these at work, or all these would have come to nothing. Men have not created the law and order that has been in the land; not lawyers, priests, kings, any of them. They have sometimes been instruments in carrying out the purpose of the true righteous Ruler of the land, sometimes in thwarting it. But that purpose has stood in despite of them, as it stands on in spite of us, and of all our nonsense and wilfulness. The Law reports in the newspapers may be helpful in making us recollect that fact. Very tiresome they may be in themselves; oftentimes we may think it is "much ado about nothing." We may even fancy that justice is done rather slowly, and not always done at last; but the Courts of Justice proclaim to us that it is not a name, but a reality; that it is not of to-day or of yesterday, but of Him that liveth for ever.

I ought perhaps to have spoken of another and even more exalted assembly in the near neighbourhood of Westminster Hall, before I alluded to the Law Courts

and the Police Courts. The reports of the Debates in the Houses of Parliament form a very conspicuous and remarkable part of the newspapers during more than half of the year. I carefully abstain from alluding to any of the topics which are discussed in them, or to the opinions and powers of the debaters. But I must reckon it among the great uses of newspapers that we are reminded day by day of our own connection with the legislation and government of the land to which we belong. If we profited by it, this would be an immense advantage, one which we possess over our ancestors, who less than a hundred years ago read debates that were in great part imaginary, and which were treated by the House as a breach of its privileges. We ought to understand, better than they did, that each one of us has a share in every right and wrong act that is done by those who rule us; that whatever honour or shame befalls our country befalls us, the members of it. Above all, the sight of these debates tells those of us who have votes for members of Parliament, that these are nothing less than trusts to us from God; that he who sells his conscience to anyone is giving up the dignity of a citizen and a man, is a slave himself, and is helping to make his countrymen slaves.

All this time I may seem to have been talking merely as a Londoner. But here are reports about agriculture from the different English counties, about the state of trade in our towns, about corporations, about schools, about meetings local and general, commercial and bene-

volent, about lines of railways, about health and sickness, wealth and poverty, in all parts of the land. The newspapers surely do us a great service in furnishing us with these statements. So we are reminded that England does not consist of towns, and villages, and hamlets, all with separate interests, that it is not a set of principalities as it once was; but that we are one people, speaking one language, having the same law and the same Queen; and yet that within this body there are a great many different members, that each town, and each neighbourhood, contributes something to the strength of the body which another could not contribute; coal coming from one, and corn from another, and cattle from a third; this being the town for cotton, and that for cutlery, and that for earthenware. And the newspaper reminds us of what we are sometimes rather inclined to forget, that the coals do not dig themselves out of the earth, that the corn does not sow or reap itself, that if glass and cotton and knives have to do with machines, those machines are worked by hands, and those hands belong to living men. We have to apprise ourselves again and again, that whether the provinces and the towns of England are to strengthen each other and to strengthen the capital, or to weaken each other and to weaken the capital, whether they are to help to make up a great country, or to destroy one that is made, depends much less upon the stuff they send up in the shape of cotton or calico or hardware, than upon the stuff of which the men that work these things are composed.

During the Crimean War the question was often debated, whether newspapers were doing good or ill service to us by reporting the acts and plans of generals and the condition of armies. The same question has been raised by the Americans in the war of the North and the South. I do not pretend to settle it. That injustice must often be done by such reports to men who were struggling with enormous difficulties, that their intentions may often have been embarrassed by hasty guesses about them, and comments on them, I have no doubt. But as I am speaking of the good which newspapers do us, I would rather dwell upon the benefits which I think all of us might have derived from the account of hardships which brave men were suffering on both sides. It was somewhat terrible to be reading a journal, in an easy-chair over a comfortable fire, and to be told of what men, all of our own flesh and blood, some, perhaps, of our own kith and kin, were bearing in the night trenches or in the field, or in the hospital after the battle was over. It was good to have the comparison brought fully home to us, to have our shame awakened for our own comforts, to have our reverence kindled for those who could bear even more than for those who could dare; to feel how closely we are knit to men at a distance from us, having vocations wholly unlike ours. There were electrical wires communicating between the hearts of English men and women and that of some soldier in the field, more wonderful than those which brought the messages concerning him.

And the sympathy, it was found, need not be a barren one. There could be actual services rendered, actual comforts brought home to sufferers, in spite of distance, in spite even of ignorance and blundering. Many of these lessons belong to a time of peace as much as of war. The newspapers tell us of men, born on our soil, speaking our tongue, who are making precious discoveries and dying slow deaths in Africa, who are conquering American or Australian forests, who are encountering the old beliefs and customs of India or of China. They may be imparting the blessings which they have inherited to other lands; they are in danger of losing those blessings themselves, of forgetting the past, of ceasing to be brave men and speakers of truth, of acting as if they were sent upon the earth to crawl upon it, to worship the gold at their feet, instead of being free men and children of God. In proportion as you think of them, and try to ward off these dangers from them, you are doing much to save yourselves and your own children from the like. Let us be thankful then to the newspapers for bringing them to our minds, for letting us know a little what these men are thinking, and doing, and enduring.

I shall stay too long upon this part of my subject, which is the pleasantest part, the part in which I am recounting our obligations. I must come to the Leading Articles, with which I said I should finish this portion of my case. I suppose the editors of the newspapers consider this far more important than any of the divisions

of their work to which I have hitherto alluded. I do not agree with them, because it seems to me that records of facts, even if they are imperfect and need correction in some particulars, have more worth and interest than talk about the facts, let it be as ingenious as it may. Good deeds must be the substantial part of the feast; good sentences can be but the seasoning of it. At the same time I am not the least disposed to underrate the mighty power of words. I believe the Leading Articles of newspapers are specially useful to us in leading us to reflect very seriously on this power.

A book which has lasted hundreds or thousands of years, which has been read by young and old, which has given birth to great thoughts and generous acts, ought to impress us more with this power than a flying sheet. But I doubt if it does. We feel the power of the newspaper in building up and pulling down characters, in affecting the judgments of men about the acts of their rulers, in leading them to change opinions which they fancied were very fixed. We see this kind of influence going on. We are conscious of it in ourselves. We cannot tell exactly whence it comes or how it works. It is very mysterious and undefinable. Some man wrote it down perhaps at his club, or in his chamber, perhaps in a great hurry, when a messenger was waiting to send it to the press. He might be at that moment under some chance impulse of pleasure, or of anger, or of wine. He might be anxious to please some friend, or injure some enemy. His thoughts get themselves put into

letters. The letters are set in types. The next morning thousands of sheets carry them east and west, north and south; they are read by thousands of eyes, they penetrate into thousands of hearts; they beget new thoughts and words, and sometimes very fierce acts. I talked of gunpowder at the beginning of my lecture. You might have thought it an idle or extravagant comparison; but what is there in the force of gunpowder that can be measured against this force? If we had a barrel of that in our houses, what would it be to these words that we carry with us wherever we go, which we are ready to discharge so freely, with so little recollection whither they may be borne, or what work of death or life they may do? Are not newspapers very useful if they bring that truth home to our minds, if they make us feel that we, at all events, have no right to say "Our words are our own; who is lord over them?"

In what I have said of the uses of newspapers, I have not dwelt upon the obvious advantages which they afford to mercantile men. I have spoken of them as instruments which may contribute to awaken our minds, and set us upon enlarging our knowledge of that which surrounds us, and of that which has been in past times. Nothing is good which does not carry us beyond itself. Every wise book helps us, because it makes us understand the world or ourselves or God better: that is what we prize it for. So a wise man does not talk about himself. He makes us honour him and love him because we feel that that is not the thing he is chiefly

occupied about. He does not want to make us worship him; if he could, he would draw us away from all false worship of every kind. This test is as good for newspapers as for anything else. They are useful when they help us to rise above themselves, and to seek for things which they cannot tell us; when they remind us for instance that we belong to a race which existed ages before they existed, and that our children will go on after they are turned to their original rags. But they are mischievous—mischievous to our knowledge, mischievous to our morality, when they lead us to be content with themselves, when they induce us to draw our knowledge or our morality from them. This is the subject I am now going to speak of. I am not going to blame them, but to point out a tendency which there is in you and in me to make them into idols, which the more we worship the more we degrade ourselves, and the less fit we are to reverence anything that is better and higher.

Let me show you in two or three ways how this tendency works. And first let me speak of the word *News*. I have told you that the newspaper may recall to us that which is very old, that it must do so if we feed upon it rightly, and suck the juice out of it. But you will all remember what we are told of the Athenians, that they spent their time in nothing else but either to hear or to tell some new thing. These Athenians were a very clever people, the cleverest people, perhaps, that has ever been upon this earth. They were at one time a

very great people. They loved their soil; they honoured the tombs of their fathers; they sent forth ships; they planted colonies; they raised noble buildings; they wrote worthy books; they resisted and put down oppressors. It was not so at the time St. Luke speaks of. They had become a poor, frivolous, slavish people: just because they had become a newsmongering people. The passion for novelty had eaten up all other and better passions in them—all reverence, all faith, all freedom. It is a very awful lesson. We Englishmen are not one-half as clever as the Athenians were. But men have lived among us, and deeds have been done among us, nobler than any they could boast of. We have been a more practical people than they were; less prone to speculation, but more successful in hard, tough business. Depend upon it all these qualities are in the greatest danger of perishing; depend upon it we shall become petty and frivolous, and stupid withal, if we learn to spend our time as the Athenians spent theirs. There are men among us who do. We call them *Quidnuncs* or *What-nows*. They go about from club to club, and house to house, and street to street, saying, "What now? What is the last, the very last newest thing? Who can tell us? That which was heard two or three days, or two or three hours ago, is stale. We must have something fresh. That is what we are hunting for." Such men are the most miserable creatures almost that this earth brings forth. The past is nothing to them, nor the future. They live in the

moment that is passing. Their life is absorbed into that. And do not let any of us say that we are not in danger of becoming such men as these. We are all in danger of it; men of all parties and professions, men whose language sounds most serious, as well as those who never speak of any world but this. Our chatter and gossip may take different forms, may find different excuses. But if we let the newspapers of one kind or another, however high their intellectual, or moral, or spiritual, pretensions may be, rule over us, gossips and chatterers we shall become, *that* and nothing else. I would especially beseech my friends of the working class to beware of this tendency in themselves, and to help us in correcting it. We fall into it through idleness. Everything in their position and circumstances warns them that idleness is their curse, that labour is their blessing. In their manual tasks they must be earnest if they would do anything. Let them bring the same earnestness into the little time that they can give to reading; into the words they speak when they are talking with each other; into the thoughts they think when they are walking alone. If they study ever so little, they may be honest students; and five minutes of honest study is worth days and weeks of flimsy newsmongering study, just as five minutes of honest work is worth all that produces the flimsy trumpery articles, which look fine to-day and are worn out to-morrow. If the newspapers supply us with the materials for thinking, they will do us good; if we use them as

substitutes for thinking, they will destroy both our intellects and our characters.

Another point. I have tried to show you how the sense of personal responsibility may be aroused in us by much that we read in the newspapers, and especially by the reflections which they suggest on the power of the words which we hear, and which we speak. But I must tell you also that the newspapers may do more than all other literature together to weaken in us this sense of personal responsibility. We know nothing of the man who writes articles in the newspaper. He calls himself "*We*. If anyone complains of him, "*We*" answer the charge; if "We" are convicted of a libel, the printer answers for it. Now I do not say whether this ought to be so or not. I scrupulously abstain from laying down any maxims about the conduct of newspaper writers, what it behoves the English law to require of them, or what is due from them as subjects of the law of God. I shall express no opinion on these points; perhaps I have formed none. My business is with the effects of this "We" system upon ourselves, not with the propriety or impropriety of it in them. Looking at it in that point of view, I do say very solemnly, that if any one of us gets into the habit of thinking that he is not an *I*, a living person, who must give account of himself, who must answer for what he says and what he does before men and before God—if any kind of phraseology leads him to lose sight of that truth, and not to keep it with him as the

one that is the most serious and terrible of all in whatever business he is engaged, his moral existence is in jeopardy; he will soon be unable to look his neighbour straight in the face; courage and truthfulness will forsake him. I cannot but think that we are all very much inclined to lose ourselves in a crowd, to muffle and disguise our voices, to act as ventriloquists, so that our words may not seem to others, and scarcely to ourselves, to have come out of us. And the consequence is that, by degrees, the words do not come out of us; they do not express what is in us; we catch our opinions, as we catch a cough or a fever, from the people we come into contact with. I say then, let us leave the newspapers in undisturbed possession of their magnificent plural, and let each Englishman try to take credit for nothing that is not his own, to shrink from the confession of nothing that is.

Sometimes it is suggested that this plural mode of speaking is favourable to modesty. The newspaper writer does not like to put himself forward. He is so overwhelmed with diffidence that he would rather no one asked about him, or attributed to him the paternity of the thoughts which he is so generous as to bestow upon the world. If, after reading the leading articles of newspapers, you should be inclined to say that this is the impression they leave upon your mind, that a retiring bashfulness, with all its accompaniments of reserve in expressing any decided judgment, unwillingness to pronounce upon the merits or demerits of others,

abstinence from boasting and self-congratulation, strike you as their most characteristic features, I shall say nothing at all to disturb that opinion. But I must say this, that if we borrow this form of speech from the newspaper teachers, we shall not acquire along with it their humble virtues. I believe the danger is very great, that if any one of us were to write with the habitual consciousness that he had a "We" to cover all his vain and blustering assertions, he would give way to the self-conceit which is lurking in him more than he had ever done before, that it would utter itself in the most offensive, and sometimes in the most ridiculous, language. I never can believe that the face under a mask is the one which is most troubled with blushes.

There is, however, another justification for this plural pronoun. The writer in the newspaper, it is said, speaks the sentiments of the persons who he expects will chiefly buy his paper. He is what is called the "organ" or spokesman of a party; he has therefore a right to look upon himself as a sort of collector of its votes and notions. No doubt he ventures now and then to correct them; he wishes to lead the judgment of his readers, to give a direction to it. But, on the whole, he will not fulfil his function unless he is a tolerably faithful echo of their sentiments, unless he either ascertains through conversation and correspondence, or can divine by instinct, what their sentiments are, and can put them out for their perusal in a plausible,

readable form. I am sure a man must have a great deal of skill who is able to do this. It is a very wonderful operation this, of inhaling opinions, and then of exhaling them again, each week, or day. I am not a fit judge whether it is a satisfactory or a healthy operation for the individual who performs it, whether he feels himself to be, or actually is, a freer and wiser, and truer, man after it than before it. *That* he must know best. I cannot report the debates which are going on within him, or count up the Ayes and Noes of his conscience. But speaking as one of the public, as one of you, not *for* you—since I have disclaimed any such right—I must say I doubt very much whether it is good to have our thoughts and feelings and prejudices brought back to us day by day, and made to look much better and more respectable than they look when we state them to ourselves. There is an instrument which we often see worn by sickly people in our streets. It is called a "respirator." I have heard different opinions from medical men about the utility of this instrument for those who have weak lungs. Some say it is good because it keeps them from the outward air; some say it is bad because they who wear it only breathe their own breath. Whichever of these doctrines is true about those who are in a bad condition of body, I do not suppose that anyone would recommend a respirator to an ordinary Englishman, who has the right use of all his functions. The doctor would say to him, "Go out, winter and

summer, morning and night. Get the freest air you can. Beware of nothing so much as of close air, in which your own breath is continually returned to you again." Now, a newspaper which speaks to us the notions and phrases of one school and party is a Respirator. We get our own breath returned to us again; we do not breathe the free open air. If we say plainly, "This is necessary, because our judgments and consciences are in such a diseased state that the free air does them harm, we cannot venture into it," then we may consult the moral doctor whether we are not making them more diseased, whether we are not shutting out the chances of restoration by our tenderness of ourselves. But if we are not willing to allow that we are out of sorts and need advice, then by all means let us throw off our respirators; they must help to stifle us.

Perhaps it will be said, "We are not tied to our own party newspaper; we may read those which most contradict our opinions." Just so. I should recommend that course. A dear friend of mine once resolved that he would read only those that contradicted his opinions; he thought he had not the least occasion for those that agreed with him. But there is danger here too, danger of another kind. The newspapers rail at each other, and rail at those who differ from them. They have certain slang phrases of indignation, traditional witticisms which have been a long time in use, but which will bear to be turned, and fresh lined, and smoothed

and ironed, very often. These sharp sayings and well-seasoned jokes, whether we know it or not, irritate us considerably when they are directed against persons or principles that are dear to us. They enter into our minds far more quickly than better things; they make all the currents in them muddy. They send us forth spiteful and frivolous too, angry with the anonymous "We" who has uttered the words, angry with ourselves for being angry, quite certain that he is wrong, less willing to admit than we were before that there may be wrong in us. I am not saying that all these bad tempers of ours may not be overcome. I am sure they may be; I am sure they must be. But do not let us hide from ourselves that there they are; do not let us pretend that these influences are not likely to call them forth. One of the uses of newspapers may be, that they bring to light one and another bad tendency which was hidden in us; we abuse them when we yield to it.

No doubt a newspaper might exist, perhaps actually exists, which does not so much reflect the notions and habits of a party or section of the community as the notions and habits which are floating about in society generally—what is commonly called, in the large sense of the word, "public opinion." I can conceive a journal acquiring the power of condensing a great portion of this opinion, and sending it forth again among an immense circle of readers, each of whom feels to a certain degree as if his own opinion was rendered back to him, altered in some respects,—not exactly what he

supposed it was, sometimes looking so much better than the original that his vanity is flattered, sometimes provoking, like an ugly photograph taken while the sun was in a bad humour. Mr. Kinglake has been trying to persuade us that we actually possess a newspaper of this kind. He describes in his brilliant way how it acts upon us, and how we act upon it; how it tells us what we should think, how it reflects all our varying modes of thought, how it finds out what we wish at any given time, and then forces our statesmen to do what we wish in spite of themselves. I do not pretend to say whether his description is as faithful as it is ingenious and consistent with itself; but if so, the moral seems to me to be this:—A newspaper which is an exact mirror of public opinion should not be blamed by that opinion for any variations or caprices which it may exhibit. We should turn to the figure before the mirror. The variations and caprices are in us; we are pleased, or we are pained, at seeing them so faithfully represented. If we want newspapers to be other than they are, we must be other than we are. We want a standard, a "principle." Let us be sure that we can never get it from public opinion. Do you imagine that any of the great maxims which public opinion now sanctions, which newspapers enforce, were won for us by either? Do you suppose the buying and selling of human beings was put down by a strong public opinion, by the loud clamour of journals against it? Do you not know that those who struggled in

that great cause had to scorn delights and live laborious days—had to endure all kinds of false charges through the violence of public opinion, in their firm and solemn purpose that the thing which was right should not give way to the thing which was popular? They had first to wrestle with the newspapers. When they prevailed, of course the newspapers would write splendid eulogies on their deeds, and urge the building of their sepulchres. Do not suppose it ever will be, or can be otherwise. You may as well wait for the crowd to pass by you in Cheapside as wait for public opinion to make a scientific discovery, or extinguish a great popular abuse, or assert a great moral truth. All that work must go on in closets, with tears and prayers, and earnest fightings against ourselves and against the world. The world and its newspapers in due time will welcome the fruits which all can taste, if there are only some to take care of the roots, of which they know, and for which they care, nothing.

What I have said upon this subject applies very strongly to all efforts which are made for improving the physical, intellectual, and moral condition of our working classes. I have heard some of my friends in that class complain that they have no newspaper which expresses their feelings, and makes known their wants; a large capital, they say, is required to set a journal on foot, and sustain it. Those who have capital become the objects of the journalist's sympathy. Sometimes the half acquaintance which he has with the feelings of

those who have none is turned to their disparagement. Whether these murmurs are just or not, all must admit that they are very natural; but if they lead the working men to seek for some special organ for the utterance of their thoughts, I shall be sorry, for two reasons: the first is, that I believe they are never likely to gain their object, just because their class is so enormous, because it contains so much of the stuff and life of England. A journal which should profess to represent the working classes would only represent some little fraction of them: it would not represent the deepest and most earnest feelings even of that fraction, only their more superficial feelings in some moment of temporary excitement. When that passes away, they would feel that their organ went on playing certain tunes, giving out some scraping sounds, but scarcely any with which their hearts would be in harmony. It has proved so, I think, hitherto. The case may be changed hereafter, but wise men ought not to build much upon such an expectation.

The other reason is, that when the working classes desire an organ or representative for their feelings, they are desiring to be like the other classes in that which makes them weak. We do not grow and expand as we might, because we are so fond of having our own thoughts and maxims repeated to us. We are confirmed in our habits of distrust, mutual suspicion, worship of gold, because we crave for teachers who shall keep us in good humour with ourselves, not lead us to higher

aims, and a more solid foundation. I trust and believe that the ambition of our working people is different, that they do not wish to settle on their lees, but to acquire a better and nobler life. God has shown them that manhood, and not money, is to be their characteristic. Whatever cultivates that manhood, whatever makes them better and wiser and truer, that they must covet and follow after. While they make it their object to get what other classes have, they lower themselves to the level of their meanness. When they work with us that we and they may have those treasures which belong to us in common, and which poverty inherits oftener than wealth, they do what is best for themselves in doing what is best for the whole land. I do not care therefore that they should have a newspaper literature of their own. I believe that there is good to be got out of the newspaper literature which exists; in all that good they may be sharers. I have not complained, I do not think we have any reason to complain, that we are in a worse condition than our fathers, because newspapers have an influence over us which they had not in other ages. It is always dangerous to draw these comparisons; they generally are signs of ingratitude to Him who orders times and seasons. The power of newspapers could not have increased so mightily if other changes had not taken place which may do us the greatest good, which it is our own fault if we turn to evil. Their diffusion is a sign that there is far more association and fellowship among the members of the community than

there was of old; they are a sign that each one of us has an influence, and a responsibility, which did not belong even to great men who went before us. The newspapers have absorbed into themselves much that existed, and existed in a worse form, a century or two ago. If you read the last volumes of Mr. Macaulay's History, you will find what an infinite number of libels and pasquinades were circulating through society in the days of William III., and were spreading falsehood and malice wherever they travelled, which have no successors among us. Most pamphlets in our day die almost as soon as they are born; the shadow of the newspaper kills them. Our ephemeral literature is far more organized; but in bulk it is not greater, perhaps it is less, than that which was the food of other generations. Do not let any of us, then, complain that our circumstances are making us evil; let us manfully confess, one and all, that the evil lies in us, not in them. No newspapers have power to rob us of our English strength if we are watchful to maintain it. They will make us feeble and frivolous only if we trust to them to make us vigorous and earnest; we can raise their tone by raising our own. They will not be able to split us into parties if we ask God to keep us a hearty and united nation.

V.

ON CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION.[1]

I AM to speak this evening of Christian Civilization. Very elaborate definitions have been given of the word *civilization.* One of the ablest writers upon it has stated some good reasons for thinking that a definition of it would be mischievous, if it were possible. Perhaps we may arrive as nearly as we require for our present purpose at the sense of the word, by considering the adjective *civil,* out of which it has grown. *Civil* is near akin to *civic;* civil life, I apprehend, is the life of a *citizen. Civility* is the proper quality or characteristic of a citizen. Whatever then helps to make citizens, to give them the qualities that appertain to citizens, to bring them into a better apprehension of their position as citizens, to prevent that position from becoming an untenable one, must come under the name of "civilization."

You may think perhaps that I have limited the word too much. We oppose civil to *rustic.* Do I suppose that rustic life or country life has nothing to do with

[1] Delivered to the Young Men's Christian Association, about 1850.

civilization? We oppose civil to *military*. Do I suppose that the military man must be an uncivilized man; that he may not be a very civilized one? We oppose civil to *ecclesiastical*. Do I suppose that ecclesiastical life is not civilized life, or that the Church has had nothing to do with civilization?

These are not idle questions. They are very pertinent and important questions. I will try to answer them. I do *not* hold either rustic life, military life, ecclesiastical life, to be inconsistent with civilized life. I have a great reverence for country life, military life, ecclesiastical life. I do not know that I can quite contemplate civilized life apart from any one of the three. Suppose it tried to exclude them all; I conceive it would destroy itself. Nevertheless I hold the distinctions which I have pointed out to be valuable. If we attend to them, they will help us in our inquiry. There may be a rustic or country life which is a step to the life of cities, an absolutely indispensable step, and a step which does not lose its worth when you have ascended to the next. There may be patriarchal communities, village communities, which contain the germs of what is most precious in the community of the town or city, and which may continue side by side with that. But there may be conditions of existence in the country which are hostile to the growth of larger societies, which are in fact not social conditions at all. Those conditions we have a right to call uncivilized, or by any epithet, such as savage or barbarous, which is synonymous with

that. So again there may be a camp or military life, which is the very beginning of the life of towns and cities, out of which that life may develop itself; and there is a camp or military life which may be the protection of the life of towns and cities, and may grow out of that. But there is also a military life which may forbid the growth of a civic life, or which may destroy it. Again, there is an ecclesiastical life, which may produce or may nourish the life of towns or cities; there is one which may try to absorb it into itself and to extinguish it.

These observations will, I hope, make themselves more clear to us as we proceed; but I introduce them at once because they will assist us, I think, in seeing what our subject is, and in not confounding it with others which may lie very near it. We want to know what powers have been at work in former days, and what powers are at work now, to fit men for being citizens, or to prevent them from ceasing from being citizens. Whatever does this deserves to be called civilization.

Are there then different kinds of civilization? Is there a true and a false civilization? If we adhere strictly to the terms that I have used, we shall not perhaps be obliged to assume that there is. Whatever contributes to make our life as citizens a really tenable, healthful life, must be good. The evil influences must then be, the uncivilizing influences. On the whole, I believe this is the right and accurate way of speaking. But there are reasons which compel us sometimes to

depart from it. Cities may spring up too slowly; there may be a number of causes which check and stifle their growth, which keep men from being citizens at all. But they may also spring up too quickly; men may become citizens before they have passed through the needful preparation for being citizens. They may acquire habits which seem expressly derived from their fellowship in cities, and yet which, in any true sense, are unfavourable to that fellowship, and will ultimately undermine it. If ever I have to speak of a false civilization, this is what I shall mean, something which is produced by an over-eagerness to get the fruits of civil life when one has not yet found the root of it.

And now, having spoken of the substantive in my title, it behoves me to speak of the adjective. You are members of a Young Men's Christian Association; you have no doubt therefore that the names *Christian* and *Society* are naturally and properly connected. And I am convinced that you are not content that the word Christian should have a loose, vague signification. You believe that it has a real, distinct, awful signification. You would not, I suspect, be inclined to talk of Christianity doing this or that thing, effecting this or that change in the condition of the world. You would be afraid of such an abstraction as that, which might stand for a multitude of different notions, false and true. You would say you must have it changed for something that is personal and vital; and you would have no doubt where you ought to go that you may get

it so changed. You would think that the grounds of all teaching upon this subject must be in the Bible.

That is my conviction. And I do not think it is only about the word Christian that we may find light there. I believe the ground of civilization, and the cause of civilization, are clearly set forth in its earliest Books. The modern history of the world is, I believe, an application and illustration of principles which are discovered and illustrated in them.

When I speak of the *ground* of civilization, I wish you to understand at once what I mean. In one of Mr. Carlyle's miscellaneous essays, where he is complaining of some of the departures in modern times from the grandeur and simplicity of the older times, he asks whether any geometrician of our day would recognize the force of a phrase which he ascribes, I think, to Kepler, "God geometrizes." I have no doubt that many mathematicians, and students of physics in our day, would feel that this language, however little they might be disposed to use it carelessly, or to introduce it when it was not called for, had a profound signification. I should be more afraid that our moralists and politicians would not appreciate the force of the expression "God civilizes." I would wish to use that expression reverently and cautiously; but I cannot accept any other in place of it. I cannot talk of *Providence* doing this or that; it seems to me bad English and bad sense to adopt such a phrase. Providence is *foresight*. If there is foresight, there must be

some one to foresee. I require a living Being to do living acts. I must not, under any pretext, shrink from the Name which denotes a living Being. I may fear, most reasonably fear, to take that Name in vain; but I am most in danger of doing so if I use some poor unreal equivalent for it.

As I claim a right to take the language of the Bible literally, and not to dilute it by any paraphrases or equivalents, I might go through the history of Genesis or Exodus and show you what hints they give us respecting the different kinds of civilization already existing in Mesopotamia, in Palestine, in Egypt; how they explain to us the grounds of the society of which Abraham was to be the founder; how they refer it all to the revelation of an unseen Lord, who claims the man as His servant and awakens his trust; how they represent the man as prevented from mixing in any city, as being educated through the experiences, affections, sins, of a patriarchal or family life; how they trace the passage from that life into the legal or national life, as founded upon the revelation of the God of the family, as the absolute Being, the King of kings, the Punisher of tyrants, the Deliverer of slaves, their present Guide and Protector, the Punisher of their transgressions; and their Redeemer, the Guide of their heart, the Originator as well as the object of their worship; whose will all lawgivers, priests, judges, were appointed to execute; how they declare that all misery and slavery are in reserve for the people, if they lose

their trust in this Deliverer, and begin to create Him after some notions of their own, in their likeness, or in the likeness of any the most glorious object which they behold. But as you are familiar with this history, as you know how all the songs of Psalmists, and the promises and denunciations of Prophets, illustrate and expound it, I may do better if I proceed in another method, and endeavour to show you how hints which we obtain from the most trustworthy sources respecting the civilization of other nations of the old world, of those which appear to stand out in the greatest contrast to the chosen nation, enable us to understand its records, and to explain their relation to the civilization of Christendom.

Supposing then you go with me (I dare say most of you have been in the course of some visit to London) to the Crystal Palace at Sydenham. Let us walk together through the Assyrian Court, the Egyptian Court, the Greek Court, and the Roman Court, and then sit down for a while to compare the impressions we have received from them. As you think of these fierce Assyrian countenances which you have been looking at, the keen, murderous eyes—those eagle eyes, as you are disposed, and rightly disposed, to call them, that would have been their own account of them—and as you observe how the animal, the king, and the god, are all presented to you in the same form, you are sure that the authors of these statues are giving forth their conceptions of the powers which ruled over them, are telling us no Eastern tale of what their kings actually

were, but letting us into the secret of what they and their people would wish to be. The gods and the men both have the savageness of the animals, yet there are clear indications in them that they are above the animals. They use them for their purposes, even if those purposes are not essentially different from theirs. The Egyptian gives you quite a different impression from them. Their faces are animal too; but it is the repose of the animal, which they delight to dwell upon. You do not know at times whether to call the faces very earthly and sensual, or very sublime. There is no variety of expression in them; but there is a massiveness and serenity which you wonder at. Such were the Egyptian *gods*. The man thought that the powers above must be at rest. It was a kind of dull, animal rest, —a rest of death. These, too, he sought for himself.

No such image of perfection, you will see, presented itself to the Greek. In his statues all is life, energy, freedom. The most exquisite human beauty he supposes must characterize those who watch over him, who have elevated him above the rest of the world. The man seems to have got the victory over the animal; the god seems to be the man in his highest glory. But, more here than even in the case of the Egyptian, the god has no object but the gratification which he may derive from the exercise of his power, or from stooping to intercourse with creatures lower than himself. And the more vivacious the man is, the more all his energies and powers are awake, the more difficult one finds it to

determine what other ulterior end he has in using all these energies and powers but this. For a time the mere joy of feeling them and exerting them is enough; when that ceases, he, whose glory it is that he has risen above the animals, must sink into an animal again.

The Roman Court in the Crystal Palace leads us away from the mere figures which we see in it to the great people, who regarded the making of statues, even the raising of splendid and useful buildings, as quite their secondary occupation. They did not think much of the forms under which they should represent their gods; they were content to borrow such forms from their neighbours. But they had a stronger conviction than any of their neighbours, that the laws which they obeyed themselves, and which they taught other men to obey, must be derived from some higher than mortal origin. They were sure that their power to conquer other people had been imparted to them; that they could not be the masters of the world, if a Divine destiny had not appointed them to be so. Above all, no men were so deeply persuaded that the force of law itself was derived from the authority of fathers, that the foundation of civil society lay in the family society. These were not merely portions of their faith; they were those portions of it to which we must distinctly trace the strength which belongs to them, the influence which they have exercised over mankind. It was to the decay of this faith that one must attribute their weakness, and the loss of their influence. When they

began to think that laws did not really proceed from a Divine authority, but that they by tricks and impositions were to keep up the opinions in men's minds that they did; when they felt that their conquests were simply to win power and wealth for themselves; when they lost all the purity of their family affections, and especially when they became indifferent about the sacredness of the marriage bond, then it became evident that there had been something false in them from the first; then, I think, it became evident what that falsehood must be, and how the truth, which was clearly at work in them, might be severed from it.

Well; we have been through the Courts. Why is there not, why can there not be, a Jewish Court? Is it that the Jew has been learning a lore which belongs to himself, and not to these others—Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans? That cannot be, we have found them bearing witness that what these others say is true. They say, one and all, that some Being higher than themselves must have raised them above the animals, must have given them their superiority to other men who are content to be animals, must be the Author of their civil life, of their domestic life. There is no difference so far; the testimony from all is the same. Only they cannot agree what kind of Being it is who is the Author of this nobler life for them; only in trying to conceive Him they seize on this conception and that, which is fatal to their own idea, which confounds Him with some of the very things which they desire to rule, some of the habits

which they confess they have need to overcome. So at last the gods become, in the strictest sense, their workmanship; and the civilization which they ascribe to them becomes based upon a trick and a deception. When they awake out of that trick or deception, the civilization vanishes. The Jew then, though he has no Court, may teach us much about all these Courts. He enables us to interpret those peculiarities in the thoughts and history of other people which would otherwise be so utterly perplexing to us; he enables us to see how the Assyrian, the Egyptian, the Greek, the Roman, each caught some glimpse of the Being who was ruling over them, while they were reducing, dividing, and perverting Him. The Hebrew prophet, as he lay by the river Chebar, with figures before him like those with which Mr. Layard has made us acquainted, may have had visions of the true God, the God of his fathers,—may have seen how He gathered unto Himself the different qualities and powers which the Chaldean had seen presented in different animal forms; he may have seen that He was really directing the wheels within wheels of outward nature as well as of human society; he may have rested at last in the thought of a Man in the midst of the throne as the true and satisfactory image of the hidden glory, an image which must at last overthrow all other images by uniting the true meaning of them all.

And thus, I think, we find the passage from this Jewish civilization to that higher one of which it is

my business to speak to-night, which rises out of it, which must continually refer back to it, which does not set at nought, but assumes, all the fundamental principles of it, which proclaims itself however as a civilization for mankind, inasmuch as it connects those Jewish principles with the thoughts and necessities that have been expressing themselves in different portions of mankind, and so offers them the satisfaction which they could not find for themselves. The Old Testament civilization was, I take it, grounded upon the principle that God has made men in His image, and that He is not made in theirs; the New Testament civilization upon the ground that the full image of God has been revealed in a Man, and that there is a power going forth to act upon the whole being and nature of men, for the sake of raising them and conforming them to that image.

The question will no doubt occur to you—and it is one which I am bound not to evade,—Is not the society which is founded upon this basis a universal society, a society for mankind? Have not you just represented it as such? Have not you described it as the termination of that special and exclusive civilization which belonged to one nation, which severed it from all the other peoples of the earth? If that be so, how does this subject concern the one of which you professed at the outset to speak? Did not you say that *civil* was in some sense opposed to eccleciastical? Did not you intimate that it had something to do with particular

cities and nations? What relation can that have with an economy like that of which you are now speaking? Are you not unawares introducing speculations which may concern something else, but which do not concern the processes by which cities or societies of men are established and grow up?

If I endeavoured to present you with a view of European civilization generally, I might lay myself open to this charge; at any rate, I do not think that I could prove to your satisfaction that I was clear of it; I mean therefore to fix your thoughts for the remainder of this lecture upon one country, and that that country should be our own. I may be obliged now and then to look a little to the right and left of it; I may be reminded of some of its dependencies; I may think of nations that have risen out of it. But whatever I speak of will be to illustrate our own history, to make the character of our own civilization intelligible, to see in what sense it has or has not been a Christian civilization; in what sense it bears out or contradicts the remarks which I made about the earlier civilization.

Great Britain is curiously fitted to be a specimen of modern civilization. It is *the* country of Europe which makes itself known, which for all moral and political purposes begins to exist, just before the commencement of our era. When Mr. Canning said, "I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old," (meaning, in plain language, that he had recognized the independence of the South American Colonies,) he

said, with all deference to so eminent a man, a very silly thing. The New World had begun to exist some time before that, so far as it exists at present. Our confession of its having an independence of its own made some difference to its stability, but not very much. You cannot make a rickety thing stand steadily by saying that it has a right to stand if it can. But Julius Cæsar had some pretence for saying—he would not have been thought to boast much if he had said—"I called the little island on the other side of the Straits of Dover into existence." He was commissioned by the real Creator of this land, by the Orderer of its destinies, to do that. "A poor sort of achievement," he must have thought to himself, as he looked round upon the portion of the island which he visited and the people who were wandering about in it. "What good can these painted wretches, and these priests, with their worship in dark groves and their human sacrifices, do in the great world to which I belong, of which perhaps before I die I may be the ruler?" Only a man with a very lively curiosity, a real interest in strange places and strange human beings, and a sort of instinct that it was his work and the work of his country, to tame wild creatures, and to bring them into order, could have cared for such a discovery. But this clear, keen-sighted man, did care for it. He was not wrong that Rome would be able to work up even these rough materials into something of a human society. In the strictest sense of the word, they did *civilize* Britain. They

established cities in it. Their military stations became cities. There were markets at these stations, or towns; roads were made between them; a military discipline was established over them. Then this military discipline passed into a civic order. Meritorious soldiers, who had served their time, became possessors of lands, which they cultivated; the laws which they obeyed themselves they taught the native people to obey; the buildings which they had left behind in their own country could be imitated here. Houses, baths, temples, appeared. Everything wore a new face. Was not this civilization?

Surely in a sense it was; such a civilization as no people, not educated like the Roman, could have given; one which taught creatures who had only the slightest notions of obedience, that they must obey, nay, in some sense, that it was good to obey. Presently, there mixed with the words which issued from the commanders of the Roman legions, words of another sort, muttered at first indistinctly, then coming forth from the lips of men who were ready to die for what they said, then, from little societies of men gathered in out-of-the-way corners of the land, about another kingdom—a Kingdom over the spirits of men, which was altogether different from this Roman kingdom, which the Roman kingdom treated as a rival, though rather a contemptible rival, and was determined to put down. How far this message spread, or was listened to, we have not much means of ascertaining. But an unexpected phenomenon presents itself to us. The two rival kingdoms are united. The

Roman actually stoops to the one which it has tried to crush. They are blended into a common society; they are acting together upon this British-Roman race; prefects and governors who represent the one, are mixed with bishops and fathers who represent the other. Here, as elsewhere, there may be pagans (people dwelling in villages) who adhere to the old Roman worship, perhaps even to the old British worship; but the chief temples in the cities are temples for Christian worship; the Christian Fathers are united with the civil Governors in the management of them.

I asked if the Roman influence might not be called civilization. I am now to ask, whether we have not stumbled upon a Christian civilization. If I did not believe in that first principle from which I started, that God is the Civilizer,—if I did not suppose *that* was a permanent principle, whatever other might change, I might be disposed to say that this society was a specimen of Christian civilization. But holding that faith, I should say it was no such thing, for in a little time I find all this civilization crumbled to pieces. I find Christian priests or monks groaning over it, as if it were a terrible loss to the country and to the world. And yet I find them confessing, in the same breath, that it was utterly hollow, corrupt, detestable—that there was no virtue in the rulers, no virtue in the people; that the outside unity covered inside divisions and hatred; that the family life was utterly debased, if not extinct. It was very excusable and right for men of

that day to talk with horror and detestation of the cruel pagan pirates who came to trample out that civilization, to banish the Christians into the Welsh mountains, to establish their own barbarous faith and society. But these pagan pirates were our Saxon ancestors! We are bound to rejoice and give thanks that they were permitted to do that work of destruction; we are bound to ask what there was in their faith and society which was better than the faith and society of those whom they expelled. And we shall not be long in finding the answer. They *had* a faith. They did believe in an actual fight between good and evil, in which the good was to triumph; they did think that they themselves were concerned in that strife. They had, not a civilized society, but the first principle and element of such a society, that without which it is helpless and heartless, whatever may be its apparent vigour and bloom. They had a sense of the obligations of the members of families to each other; there was a pure fire on the hearth, if there was not one yet on the altar. When, therefore, after two centuries of fighting, the Message of Peace came again to our shores, it came with an altogether different power from that which it had possessed in the days of Roman domination. It came addressing itself to the affections of the husband and wife, to the conscience of the king; it was welcomed as indeed the news of a higher Kingdom, which could assert its authority in a region which the commands of the legislator could not reach. It came to renovate

much of that old Roman civilization which was not dead, but sleeping. It came confirming the national feelings which the Saxon had enkindled, but which with him could only take a fierce, warlike direction. It came to call into existence the school, and inspire an interest in sights and sounds, in the stars of the firmament and the music of the choir, in the mysteries of times and numbers, of human thoughts and speech. This, I think, he may fairly call a Christian civilization proceeding in the most direct manner from lessons respecting Christ as the King of kings, as the Awakener of the individual conscience, as the Quickener of all social tendencies and impulses.

By and by, however, we discover in this civilization also a secret weakness. The strength of the Saxon lay in action. Contemplation may be dear to him for the sake of action, as leading to action; but if once it overpowers action, if he begins to prize it, as something more sacred than action, as something opposed to action, his power is gone, he is turned into the poorest of creatures. Such a fate befell him under the ecclesiastical influence of this time. The priest seemed to him a higher being than the king; the king acquired excellence and security by transforming himself into a priest; what I said might happen, did happen. The civil life, the life of the city, the life which has to do with order, justice, government, was extinguished by that life which had at first cultivated and sustained it. That which was spiritual and celestial affected to

disdain it. Such disdain was, I conceive, suicidal. It involved Atheism. The spiritual man limited God by the exercises of his own mind, denied His presence in the world, and His government over it; what was this but setting up another God, or erecting himself into a God? He was exposed to both dangers; he fell into both sins. He was tempted to put the Roman Bishop, from whom he had received the Divine message, to whom he had naturally looked up in some very wonderful sense as the father of his Church, into the place of the Father of all. He was tempted to make himself the Divine dictator of the consciences of individual men. Such temptations might be resisted; there were many influences which resisted them everywhere; nowhere, perhaps, were these influences stronger than in our own island; but the effect upon the society was serious. Another Divine sentence went forth against it. That Saxon Christian civilization was also doomed to suffer all but extinction. Pagans again were to tread it down; and again the event proved what an infinite blessing lay beneath the apparent curse. The old society, renovated after the Danish invasion by Alfred the Great, was Saxon to its very core. The king had been nourished upon Saxon songs, before he could read a word of Latin, before there was any person able to teach it him. His boyhood was spent in action, his manhood in suffering. He came forth out of the furnace in the highest sense a Christian, not in the poor sense of those who thought that the sending out

of fleets, judging between right and wrong, translating books, were not Christian duties. These he performed honestly as in the sight of God, not caring to invent or originate laws or institutions, but seeking to bring out those that belonged to the heart and spirit of the nation, using Roman lore and Christian lore to make them more vigorous and more pure; never fearing that his people should have any knowledge which he could procure for them; labouring above all things that they might have it in the tongue of their fathers. That, I think, is the ideal of a Christian king, and of the noblest civilization.

If we have thoroughly appreciated the worth of Alfred as the conservator and restorer of native institutions, and as the vindicator of a native language—if we have thought that without these there can be no true manly civilization, we may be much puzzled when we turn over another page of our history, and find the Saxon life apparently crushed altogether; Saxon proprietors vanished from the lands of their fathers; the Saxon tongue spoken no more by those who ruled and judged in the land. This is the phenomenon which the Norman Conquest presents us with. I do not know that we can exaggerate the fearfulness of it, or the amount of immediate misery which must have been connected with it. But we have been prepared by our earlier experience to believe that calamities even worse, to all appearance, than this, may issue, not in the overthrow of a nation's order and civilization, but in their

establishment on a new and firmer basis. I do not myself see how the civilization of England could have proceeded; how we could have had an England, even if we connect that name, as we ought to connect it, especially with the Saxon, unless this conquest had been ordained for us. We acknowledge that truth by our ordinary method of treating history; we accept the Conquest, with all its evils, as a new starting-point in our annals. We confess that there has been a more continuous life in the land since that epoch than there was before.

Why was this so? The answer connects the history of England with the history of Europe generally, with the history of the Christendom civilization. There had been now for some centuries, standing face to face with it, another kind of polity altogether. The Empire of Islam had started from a very grand proclamation. God had been declared to be the King of the nations. In His Name, Mahomet and his successors had gone forth beating down all idols, all conceptions of God which men had formed. Their victories attested the might, and the truth, of that assertion. It signified not whether they came into contact with the idols of the Persian, or the idols of the Christian. The Mahometan declared that the old faith of the Jews was as true now as ever. No new revelation could have set that aside. The invisible Lord and Lawgiver was now, as ever, waging war with all visible counterfeits of Himself. To those who accept my first principle in the length

and breadth of it, the triumphs of the Islamite can cause no wonder. They must look at them as no less necessary to the modern Christian world than the invasion of Sennacherib or Nebuchadnezzar was to the Jew. But, when they contemplate the hardness and baseness of the society which arose out of those triumphs; when they see how inevitably it took the form of an imperial tyranny, how the belief of God simply as a Ruler who issues commands and decrees, simply as a destroyer of idols, between whom and men there is no meeting-point, no living, permanent bond, must lead to the withering of the reverence for men, and the denying of all the springs and sources of human life; they must needs expect also that He who permitted this discipline for His creatures, would show them very clearly that there was a social order for them which was the very reverse of this—a social order grounded on the very principle which the Mahometans set aside and denounced, on the existence of a relation between God and man. If we consider the history of Europe at this time we shall see, amidst all its perplexities and contradictions, how wonderfully this idea, this belief, did determine all the thoughts and the politics of the nations in it.

We talk sometimes of the feudal system as if it were utterly opposed to civilization, as if it were a crushing weight upon all human society. There is abundant excuse for that language. If we contemplate the noble merely as a man possessing certain privileges which

others do not possess, exempt from the burdens of others, exempt from their responsibilities; if we see him as he presented himself in France before the Revolution—as he often presented himself in England during the Middle Ages—no language which we can use of this kind is too strong. And even if we look at the feudal lord in his best condition, we cannot immediately connect him with civilization in the strict sense of that word. He dwells upon his lands; he has little to do with the order and government of the city. But the feudal principle, as it asserted itself in Europe during the ages when Christendom was contending with Mahometanism, did not declare that the noble was a privileged being, exempt from obligations and responsibilities. It proclaimed him to be a link in a chain of dependences and responsibilities; it acknowledged the lord to have duties to the vassal, as well as the vassal to the lord; it mixed the family principle with the tenures of land, and the services of the soldier. It recognized Christendom as constituting a family: it declared that family to be grounded upon the revelation of ONE who, being the Chief of all, became the Servant of all. It is a great mistake and, I think, a great impiety, to deny this fact, merely because we see how continually this law of mutual dependence was outraged in the conduct of those who professed to be bound by it. We feel the transgression when we feel the principle which was transgressed. We see what were the dis-

orders of that society by acknowledging what was the order which God has established in it. The idea of chivalry, of the knight, the great man, being a servant, the servant of Christ and the servant of the weak and helpless, may often be represented to us as a mere affectation, because it became so afterwards in those who made most profession of it, and because there were the greatest inconsistencies in the conduct of those who were actually influenced by it; it was really an integral part of this order, or constitution. The knights did not adopt it as a fine theory; they bowed to it as a power which they must needs obey, which it was a kind of treason to resist.

Well; we often say that the Normans introduced the feudal system into England. That, I think, is incorrect language. It is not in the power of any people to set up a system in a land for which there is no preparation in the institutions of that land. The feudal principle was not new in the eleventh century; not new in England, or anywhere. But we may say that the individualizing tendencies of the Saxon were not favourable to the working of this principle. We may say that the first Norman prince, being thoroughly penetrated with it, organized the country into a conformity with it, which would not have been possible if there had not been that new race brought into our land, and that new distribution of lands which was consequent upon their acquisition of it. And it is true that the wretchedness was partly compensated at

the time, was abundantly compensated afterwards, by the obligations under which the new proprietors were laid, by the account which they were obliged to render in of their estates and of the services which were due from them, by the position which the king was forced to assume as the enforcer of a law for the whole land, from which he could not himself claim exemption.

There might, however, have been an evil of another kind resulting from this change. Europe was, as a power, now assuming to be a general Christendom family. In this character it was urging on the Crusades against Mahometans; in this character it was doing homage to the earthly "father" at Rome; in this character it was using the common Latin tongue for all school instruction. The Normans specially favoured this tendency. They were more than the other Crusaders, more than others the devoted servants of the Roman bishop, more than others the Latin scholars of the time. England might have been so brought into this circle of nations as to lose its own distinct, insular character. William the Conqueror, coming over here with the authority of the Pope, might have turned the country into a mere dependency of the Pope. Robert, the son of William, who went to the Crusades, might have inspired a whole people with his rage. The ecclesiastics whom the Norman princes established among us, might have hindered our people from ever having again that gift of a native literature, which Alfred had secured for them.

None of these evils came to pass. The Norman

princes, once established here, became jealous of their rights as national sovereigns, and quite determined that the Pope should not take them away. Each one of them felt the necessity of maintaining his position at home stronger than any impulse to join the Holy Wars: that did not take hold of any English sovereign till their line had ended. The Norman ecclesiastics, though they wrote in Latin, wrote chronicles which connected the particular history of some monastery with the general history of England; so they helped to keep alive the sense of a relation between the new age and that which had passed away. The ecclesiastics had disputes with the sovereign; sometimes in behalf of their own order, sometimes in behalf of moral principles and culture, against mere force. In the former case they often led the sovereign to assert the power of laws which no class of his subjects could break through: in the latter, they asserted the power of laws which neither subjects nor rulers could break through. Either way, there came blessings out of the conflict which we should have wanted if there had been perfect peace.

And so the way was preparing for the renovation of the Saxon race, and for that kind of civilization which I said the feudalists could not give; which, if it had been left to itself, it would have permanently checked. The Saxons had been indifferent landowners. Their Thanes had been petty, turbulent rulers, disobedient to the chief authority, apt to be tyrannical over those beneath them. In the loss of that occupation they

discovered another for which none were equally fitted. They learnt trades; they formed societies of artificers; they acquired charters of enfranchisement; they began to direct the government of towns; they reappeared as the great middle class, the special English class of England. All their individual skill and power had its full play; but they showed that they also had great social qualities; they could work together, not of course without abundance of disagreements and heart-burnings, but still, with the sense of a common interest and common obligations. The trades are united by religious bonds; they imitate in some respects the monastic fraternities. The charters of their confederations resemble those of the original houses. Still they look back to old laws and old times. They boast to be a revival of rights that were conceded under the Saxon kings. The tradition of those kings becomes stronger as the race acquires more of consistency. And now charters become recognized as assertors of mutual obligations, for the rulers and subjects of the whole land. That which the Barons in their own name compelled John to sign, reaches far beyond them—to the citizen, even to the serf. The citizen speedily becomes a citizen indeed. He has a place not merely in his own municipality; he has a right to send his advisers to the Crown. He forms part of a Parliament with the spiritual and feudal lords; and he learns to speak again; nay, to make others speak like him. He has never parted with his Saxon language for the purposes of trade and inter-

course. Now it is found capable of fulfilling all other purposes. It had been gaining strength, refinement, richness, while it had been kept down by the Norman-French, and the Latin; it had compelled both to minister to it, and develop its powers; it started up a language for the whole people, a language for the expression of the divinest thoughts. It can claim a Bible for itself.

If the feudal nobles, or the ecclesiastics, had been able to crush this life of the towns, or to give it the form they would have chosen, what a loss England would have suffered—what a loss they themselves would have suffered! I cannot measure the greatness of the calamity. For I cannot help perceiving, that it was this trading class which hindered the nobles from being a set of self-indulgent, self-willed tyrants, which maintained a continual protest against the disposition of the ecclesiastics to make themselves into gods; to put visible things for invisible, objects of the sense for objects of the spirit. I cannot help seeing that they were the assertors of a direct government of God over the world; that they testified of a conscience in human beings which needed to be purified and delivered; that they maintained the right of men to trust in a Purifier and Deliverer. Christian civilization would have been utterly at an end for England, so far as I see, if this class could have been prevented, by any outward force or any spiritual enchantment, from arising out of the tomb in which it was buried after the Conquest, and enter-

ing upon a new and higher existence. It must have been kept in that tomb if our civilization had depended on the wit and contrivances of men. It could not be kept there, because the history and progress of nations are not left to their mercy.

But would it have been good for this class, good for the country, if it could have asserted an exclusive position for itself, if it could have supplanted all the order which existed in the country before, and could have originated a new order of things? No doubt the citizens of towns had the same motives for desiring this result, had the same excuse for desiring it, as the barons or ecclesiastics had for seeking to retain all power in their own hands, and for making their position an exclusive one. But there would have been the same curse, I believe, on the accomplishment of either purpose. The member of the middle class would then have lost all that veneration for the past, all that feeling of his connection with the old life of England, on which so much of his strength and nobleness depended. He would not only have treated the chivalry and courage of the knight with contempt, he would have forgotten the qualities which were properly his own. The social, fraternal feeling, of the tradesman, would have been changed for mere trade jealousies and rivalries. He would have trampled on the consciences of others as they trampled upon his; and, doing so, he would cease to feel the sacredness of his conscience. He would no longer claim a right to trust in a Being

higher than himself, and higher than all mortal trust; he would rather claim a right to distrust everyone except himself. He would therefore become an enemy of the progress of his country; he would hold it down to the habits and notions which belonged to his own circle and his own town.

Without the citizens of the towns we should have had no Reformation in the sixteenth century. But if they had been able to impose their notions and opinions on the rest of society, the Reformation would have been a far less deep, radical, earnest one than it was; it would have been a change to something new, not a protest against novelties to the faith which had sustained men in all generations. It would have been a protest against many falsehoods rather than an appeal to Truth; an impatience of tyranny rather than a revelation of Freedom.

There have been two great experiments of opposite kinds which illustrate these remarks, and which seem to me of immense interest in considering the principles of true civilization. One was made in the reign of Charles I. The King was a graceful, accomplished gentleman; an enlightened patron of art. He would have civilized England by masques and Court entertainments, by fine pictures, by music, by a splendid ritual and church ornaments. It was quite clear that the people of England could not be civilized in this manner. It was the civilization of a class; it addressed itself to none of the deep sympathies which

are stirring in men's hearts. It must be enforced by tyrannical acts; it must set at nought strong, earnest convictions; and though accomplished artists and poets might second the purposes of the Court, it soon became clear that art and poetry were suffering from its patronage—they were becoming poor, withered, insincere. They could not give life; they needed a spring of life from some higher source to renovate themselves. Milton, the great Puritan poet, with his living faith in God, was not merely to be the spokesman of the burning thoughts and indignation which were possessing men; he was to kindle the life of English song again. The Court experiment failed altogether; there was a vehement reaction against it, to be followed by a different reaction afterwards.

The other case to which I alluded stands in close relation to the history of this Stuart time, but it is drawn from the eighteenth century. Some of the earnest men who were opposed to the Court of Charles became the founders of the New England colonies. These colonies, in truth, exhibited the feelings and belief of the middle class at a time when their feelings and belief were particularly serious and deep. Their descendants in the eighteenth century believed less, but they inherited much of the firmness, solidity, thriftiness, of their forefathers; they were fitted for the independence into which the madness of their mother-country forced them. One boy especially, a printer's boy of Boston, prepared them for the moment when they should enter

upon new and mighty functions. 'I do not know such another career in the world's history. Benjamin Franklin, trained in the school of hardship, rising by sheer self-denying industry, with little personal ambition, stamped his own image upon a new world. "Poor Richard's Maxims, or the Way to Get Wealth," became a text-book, almost a Bible, to his contemporaries. They deserved much of their fame. They gave warnings which we all need to have; they denounced habits of extravagance, and recommended habits of thrift, which are precious to all honest people. But was the civilization which is sketched out for us in "Poor Richard's Maxims" a civilization which would bear the test of a country's experience? The noblest Americans, the men who are doing most, suffering most, for the sake of their country, are the foremost to give us the answer. They will tell us, that, so far as Americans only pursue the ends which this book set before them, so far they cannot be what Franklin would have wished them to be—not to take any higher standard. Franklin was a man of science. But those who merely follow the way to get wealth—however much science may be needed to that end—will never delight to live laborious days merely to find truth. Franklin wished to get rid of the slave trade,—ultimately, no doubt, of slavery. But those who think only of the way to get wealth must maintain that cursed institution. Franklin loved, above all things, thrift, and honesty, and fair-dealing. Those true-hearted

Americans, of whom I spoke, cover their faces and weep while they talk of commercial panics and repudiations as the consequence of the eagerness to get wealth.

Are we to judge Americans? God forbid! I claim this lesson for us, then, as well as for them. I claim it as a proof that Civilization is not to be merely of a class; that each class is meant to contribute its own element to the greatness and perfection of it. I claim it in speaking to you, because I am sure that you—the members of the middle class—have a right, not only to the Civilization of your own class, but to all that has belonged to your nation, now and in the days of old. I claim it, because I say that the chivalry of former days, the arts of former days, the poetry of former days, belong to you as much as to any nobles of the land. I claim it because I feel that you, as members of a Christian association, are bound to believe that there is a Divine power at work, in yourselves and the whole nation, to give it blessings of which no dreams of ours can conceive. I claim it, with all the other lessons I have tried to set before you to-night, because I do trust that I shall yet see the highest class, the middle class, the learned class, bringing in all the treasures of wisdom, thought, life, to help in the work they have to accomplish—the civilization of the large class which still craves it at their hands, which demands all the help they can give it, which, we may be sure, it is God's will should share every blessing that His Son has conferred on us.

VI.

ANCIENT HISTORY.[1]

I AM to give a lecture this evening on History. The subject cannot be indifferent to any of us. I believe its importance will be brought home, one day or other, to every man. There have been times in most of our lives when it has become utterly dead to us, when we have said, as an English statesman said, "Read me anything but that." There have been times when we have been roused to such a sense of its meaning, and of our concern in it, that nothing has seemed so precious to us. What has been our experience may be the experience of any Englishman. He may want some crisis to tell him, that every step in past history is a message to him concerning the present, and the future; concerning his own life, and the life of his children. Then what have been merely sounds in his ear may become words that ring through his heart. We should be preparing others and ourselves for such crises; we should be considering what has quickened

[1] Delivered at the Working Men's College, Great Ormond Street, 1865.

lessons in our minds that had been lying in them like mere lumber. It is not the worth of the things we say which makes them effective; it is their fitness for those who hear them, it is the breath that kindles them.

We commonly divide History into Ancient and Modern. This is a convenient and honest division, not forced upon the facts, but derived from them. I shall speak of Ancient History to-night. If there should be an open Saturday next term, or the term after, I may speak of Modern. But I think we may learn something of what history is, and of the impulses which stir men to seek for it, and care for it, if we only hear of its beginnings.

What the name means, you, perhaps, know; I think I have spoken of its derivation more than once in this place. We ought not to forget it, for it is not what we should have expected; and it suggests much. We are wont to think of "history" as a narrative of events. It was taken from a verb which signifies, to ask questions. How did these two senses, apparently so different, become connected in the mind of a man, or a nation? We must ask the Greeks, from whom we get the word, to tell us that.

Herodotus of Halicarnassus is often called "the Father of History." Whether he has a right to that title or not, he was at least an indefatigable questioner. What kind of questions he asked, and of whom, and where he asked them, and how he was led to ask them, I will try to indicate. If there is a translation of him

in the library, as I hope there is, you can verify my statements, or correct them when they are wrong.

He dwelt in a city on the coast of Asia Minor. It was one of many cities which consisted of Greek colonists, but which were under the dominion of the Persian king. The inhabitants of these cities discovered that they had a kind of power which the Persian monarch did not possess. He had all physical strength, and the power of armies. The Greeks had an art which sometimes rose to wisdom, which sometimes sank into cunning. The Greeks, moreover, associated together. They had a Government in each city. They had a meeting of different cities. They had a common Temple to which they resorted. There, as they believed, dwelt a God of Light and Wisdom; their masters, the Persians, went to consult this god. After a time, the Persian monarch became jealous of these dangerous little colonies; he got into direct collision with them. Then he began to ask whence the colonists came, what their mother-cities were, to which they turned with reverence, and with which they seemed to maintain a regular intercourse. The Persians heard of Athens and Sparta; the one the head of the Ionian, the other of the Dorian, tribe of Greeks. They sent to demand subjection of them; it was refused. Two great expeditions went forth against them. The heart of the people of both tribes, though they had many jealous feelings against each other, rose against the common foe. At Marathon the armies of Darius were defeated by the Athenian

general, Miltiades. The greater expedition of his successor was checked in the passes of Thermopylæ, by a band of Spartans, who "died," as it was written on their tombs, "in obedience to the laws." The Athenians left their city, betook themselves to the wooden walls of their ships, and scattered the fleet of the Persians at Salamis. The strong were broken in pieces; the weak prevailed.

Herodotus was born six years after the battle of Marathon, four years before the battles of Thermopylæ and Salamis. He grew up, as a young man, in the sight of the Persian despotism. He spoke the language of the Greek freeman. Tales of what each had done must have been continually in his ears. What could be so worthy a subject of questioning for him, as, how the strife had arisen, how the victory had been won? Anyone in his circumstances might have cared to pick up information about this war, and, when he had got the information, to spread it abroad. Herodotus perceived how much more he must do if he would do this work faithfully. He must look into the life of his countrymen; he must learn what had befallen them before this Persian War. He must look into the life of the Asiatics too; he must learn what manner of men they were, what they could tell him about their origin, and the way in which they had waxed great. A world of questions opened upon him. He must go hither and thither to satisfy them. He was reminded by his own position that Greece was a colonizing country. He

must ask about each of its colonies; who had started it, why this or that man had left the house of his fathers; what had led him to one place or another. Then he was reminded continually of the differences between the Greek tribes. How had these arisen? What fruits had come from them? What sort of Government and Laws had established itself in one tribe or another? Who had been its illustrious men?

To search after these matters was no holiday task; but it was only the smallest part of what Herodotus had imposed upon himself. The Persians—he must know about them as well as about their foes. What customs had they? Were they like the Greek customs, or different from them? What did they believe about the powers which they could not see, but which they worshipped? Was their belief the same with the Greeks', or at variance with theirs? Then these Persians, though they had not been colonists like the Greeks, had been mighty conquerors. What lands had they conquered? One of their kings, who had been a fierce supporter of the Persian worship, had attacked Egypt, and had treated its priests with great rudeness and contempt. Egypt—that was a wonderful country! The Greek had heard that his own country had received many lessons from it. He must go and investigate it; he must find out all he could about its soil, and the inundations of the Nile, and where the Nile came from. He must persuade the priests to tell him as much as they would about their gods and their traditions, and why the

King Cambyses had such a vehement dislike to them. He must inquire what the "tombs of the kings" meant, who had built them, who were buried in them.

You will desire to know, perhaps, how all this various information could make up one work. Should it not have been diffused through a great many? No; in the mind of Herodotus all these thoughts disposed themselves, naturally and without effort, around that war between Persians and Greeks, which had first set him upon his inquiries, and which he never forgot, whatever else he was engaged in. He wrote in a most simple style; he chose out of the dialects of his country, —for several were spoken in the Asiatic colonies,— the one which was the fittest for easy narrative, which made narrative seem most like conversation. But he was a great artist nevertheless. There is no picture in the National Gallery which exhibits the different figures that are introduced into it, and the landscape in the background, more in their right proportion to each other, and so as to produce an harmonious effect, than his narrative, crowded though it is with men of various countries, and in various costumes. We do not observe the secret of his art, but it has conveyed its impression to generations of those who spoke his own language, and to those who speak the languages of modern Europe.

And the part of his work which perhaps we are most disposed to pass over, and to treat as foolish, is that which most conduces to this unity. Herodotus

felt, deeply and sincerely, that all the affairs of men, as well as their thoughts and wisdom, are dependent on a world which they think of, but which they cannot see. The course of the Persian War must, he judges, be referred to the gods. The victory of freemen over the oppressors he is sure must be their work. He does not at all the less believe in the work of stout heads and stout hearts, in the blessing of wit and foresight, of good generalship, of well-managed ships; he cannot tell how these things work together with the Divine Government, but he has a strong suspicion that courage, and wisdom to discern the right end, and skill in the choice of men, are higher and nobler gifts than any success without them could be. At the same time, he is extremely puzzled by the diversity of opinions, which he finds prevailing in different regions of the earth, respecting the Powers which direct the events of the world, and the actions of men. He is anxious to get what news he can of them all, and to compare them together. Often they seem to him hopelessly discordant; the stories which contain them such as he cannot credit. The difference between the propensity of the Greeks to make human images of their gods, and the dislike of the Persians to all such images, especially strikes him. He sets it all down fairly; he has a reverence for all he hears, though he cannot explain it. He thinks that somehow these Divine thoughts are what belong to all men, and distinguish the race of men, though he is utterly at a loss to know why they

should also appear to be the source of their discords and oppositions.

On the whole, I think we may collect these maxims from "the Father of History" before we proceed further —that he was impelled to think about the previous condition of his country by the interest which he felt in what had passed, and what was passing in it, during his own time; that he was led to care for other lands because they were related to his own, and suggested continual comparisons with it; that in the course of these comparisons he became more and more aware that there must be something common in human beings, however superior the Greek might be to all the rest of them; finally, that he believed the Greeks were under some special guidance, to which they owed their wisdom and their freedom; but that somehow this secret guidance and superintendence must be over men everywhere, and must explain what was best and highest in them.

I will pass on to the next of the great Greek historians, to one who lived not far from the age of Herodotus, and has been supposed, rightly or wrongly, to have been stimulated to write by his example. If this was the case with Thucydides, the son of Olorus, it is one proof, among many, that a man of genius, who is stirred up by some other to walk in his steps, is almost sure to strike out a course of his own, and to depart as widely as possible from his master. Certainly no two writers are so utterly unlike as these. Thucy-

dides is no pleasant, easy story-teller; all his words are carefully considered, his sentences often embarrassed, his thoughts full of weight. I do not know that it is necessary to suppose that he was influenced by Herodotus, though they were so nearly contemporaries. New events, which Herodotus might partly have seen or anticipated, had occurred; events of altogether a different nature from those which he had delighted to record. They were quite as serious, even as interesting; but Shakespeare says, in a passage I read to some of you lately, "full of state and woe." The two tribes of Greece which had suspended their habitual warfare, that they might encounter a common enemy, each of which had shown forth its own virtues amidst many weaknesses and wrong-doings, had engaged in a desperate struggle for ascendency. This struggle Thucydides, who had himself been engaged in it as a soldier on the Athenian side, and who, like many eminent men, had been exiled from his country, undertook to describe: it lasted twenty-eight years, and his story does not reach to the end of it. Most of the battles in it were fought in the country of Greece, or in the islands about it. Only one expedition, which proved the ruin of the Athenian power, went as far as the island of Sicily. Just look at the area which this war must have embraced on your maps, recollect the time which I have told you is comprehended in the narrative of Thucydides, and then hear this strange language, which he utters in his very first page. He says he is going to give the world "a pos-

session which will last for ever." "What!" you will say, "we belong to an empire on which we are told the sun never sets; we read every day in the *Times* newspaper, about that amazing war between the North and South of America, in which an army sometimes travels through a State that is larger than these three kingdoms; we hear from geologists about the changes which our planet has been undergoing through myriads of years. And has this Athenian the assurance to tell us that the story of a quarrel between two tribes in his tiny country, which occupied less than thirty years, is something in which men may take interest for ever?" Yes, he says this; and he was not a boaster, but a man of great modesty. And, moreover, so far as we can judge from an experience of above two thousand years, his expectation is likely to be fulfilled. His work has endured all that time; it has been read and studied by the citizens of countries which he never heard of. Statesman have found, in it, warnings of dangers, and lessons of wisdom, which they have been able to apply to their own circumstances, and which have been most impressive when those circumstances were most serious. Hobbes, the English philosopher, devoted himself to making a translation of it just at the beginning of our Civil Wars in the seventeenth century, because he thought no book would tell so much about the causes of such a struggle, or how men ought to behave themselves in it. In my judgment, Hobbes did not take a right measure of the meaning of our Civil War, nor

learn to act rightly in it. There were principles stirring in the hearts of both sides, of which it seems to me that he knew very little. But I have no doubt that all he did know was learnt from Thucydides, or that he might have known more if he had been as faithful a student of facts, and of men's feelings, and as earnest a patriot, as Thucydides was. For in those few years, on that small area, there came forth the same passions which have been dividing and destroying Republics and Monarchies in all days since. There came forth the same debates about different forms of government, and the mode of administering them; the same controversies about the duties of colonies to a mother-country, and of a mother-country to her colonies; the same arguments to prove that it is better to restrain men by laws from the gratifications which tempt them to do wrong, or that it is better to leave them free to the play of their own faculties, and the exercise of their own judgments, which are occupying practical and theoretical people in England, and France, and Germany, during this year of 1865. And in the midst of all the events which affected the people of Sparta or Athens, we get glimpses of men, great men, and men pretending to be great, honest statesmen who do not understand their times, now and then men unjustly suspected of dishonesty, and sometimes falling into it, because they are trying to sympathise with the feelings of their countrymen, and now and then stooping to flatter them—these, and a number more, evil and good,

who were brought out by the excitement and earnestness of the time, and who are patterns of similar characters which have appeared at various moments in later times.

Thucydides, therefore, had good reason to think that his book was one which the world would not let die. Looking at it from my point of view, I should say that One who is above the world, and rules the world, has not let it die, because it has been a treasury for instruction, a witness of the evils to which men are prone, and of the power which they need to counteract those evils,—a witness of that which causes States, great or small, to perish, and of that which they require to keep them together—a witness of the reason for which wise men are raised up, and of the mischief which wise men may do if they are not under the direction of a Higher Wisdom than their own. For this lesson comes out of Thucydides also, though he speaks far less in words than Herodotus, of Higher powers. At each step of his narrative we are reminded of what must become of a nation, even though it be the cleverest nation that ever existed in the world, as the Athenian probably was, if there were no order which it was obliged to follow but its own ingenuity and caprices. Shakespeare's lesson—

> "There's a Divinity doth shape our ends,
> Rough hew them how we will,"

might be the motto to the history of the Peloponnesian War, as well as of every other history.

A period of Greek history came after this which was the sequel to both the others, but of which we have no contemporary narrative extant, only one written long after. The Republics, which strove so fiercely against each other, fell under the power of a monarch of Macedonia. The monarch, full of Greek thoughts and energy, determined to avenge the old insults of Persia, and to make Persia his subject. It was a splendid experiment, and had splendid results; for though Alexander the Great, happily, could not found a united monarchy, though all his empire broke in pieces, he did diffuse Greek civilization over Asia Minor, and Syria, and Egypt. In all these countries Greek cities were founded, Greek arts and wisdom, and the Greek language, established themselves.

It is in the course of Alexander's conquests that we get the first glimpses of a country which has become so wonderful to us during the last century. India discovered itself to him. He found there the very same kind of men whom we see exercising dominion there now. The Greeks called those Gymnosophists whom we call Brahmins. In essential features they were then what they are now,—a caste of priests and learned men, the preservers of traditions which were even then old, and of a form of society which has not yet passed away.

In this case Alexander was only an observer and reporter. Greece left no traces in India; but in Asia, and Africa, it subdued countries to its own customs and

habits of thought, its language and worship. But, whilst it was exercising this mighty power, Greece had itself fallen. Its native freedom was gone. It hoped at one time to recover that freedom through the help of a power which was not Greek, but Italian. The Romans, whilst they were subduing the earth, flattered the dreams of the Greek Republics that they might be independent Republics again. They could not be so. They had lost the capacity for independence. It was a Greek, living under the tyranny of Rome, who wrote the history of the exploits and conquests of Alexander. Another Greek, living also in Rome under the Emperor Trajan, did a greater service to all times by writing the Lives of eminent Greeks and Romans of different periods, and by comparing them together. Plutarch, to whom we owe these valuable biographies, winds up that portion of Ancient History of which I have been speaking to you. He stands on the verge of the Ancient and the Modern world. Though he belonged to an age when the true glory of both Greece and Rome had departed, seeing they both had ceased to be free, he sympathised with the freemen of both; he helps us to understand in what their influence over their times, and their respective nations, consisted. Like the earliest Greek historian, whom he disliked, because he had called his countrymen in Bœotia stupid, Plutarch has perceived that nations must be connected together, that there is a human life which is common to them. And though he was born in an age when men had begun to distrust

the Legends which Herodotus recorded, though Plutarch was a philosopher, and knew all that philosophers had said against these Legends, he did not venture to discredit them. He had as strong a conviction as Herodotus had, that human life must be grounded on a Divine life; that history is an unintelligible riddle, in one age or another, if there is not a Higher guidance over men. What he felt very strongly was, that this guidance must be a good guidance; that the Divine life must be a higher, purer, more perfect life than the human. So much he was sure of; where this life was to be found he could only guess. But the philosopher leaves us this lesson, which comes out of all Greek history, that we cannot make a great separation between the world which we see and that which we do not see; that men's belief about the one will affect in a myriad ways their acts in the other, and will mould their characters; that, somehow, the connection between them must be explained, if men are to live together in societies, and are not to be mere herds of animals, or the slaves of base, superstitious fears.

And now we must pass to the historians of that city to which Plutarch has introduced us. Perhaps you may find in his Lives, as well as anywhere, what the secret of the Roman excellence was, and how it differed from that of the Greeks. The relation of the father to the child seemed to the Roman the most wonderful fact in the world. There it was; each man came into the world with this bond holding him; he could not cast it aside.

The authority of the father, he thought, must be the greatest authority of all; the reverence of the child to the father must be the most profound of all. He called it piety. It was connected with all his religion. He believed in a Divine Ruler over all men, who had the kind of authority which was expressed in the dominion of the father over the child. This was to be enforced by priests; they were to keep up in the people the feeling that they must not transgress the laws of the State—that they must not go out of their ranks in the army. A mighty power came to the Roman people through this obedience, this religion. It made them a compact people, and a people capable of all energetic doings; while the wit of the Greeks—fine and beautiful as it was—set them at variance. And yet Rome had its strifes as much as any Greek city. That feeling of the Fatherly Authority made old families, old persons, very venerable. These possessed the earliest power, and rights, in the city. But, happily, they could not hinder other tribes from mingling with them. They, too, had surely a right to claim a place in the city,—they, too, were surely meant to be citizens, and have the privileges of citizens. These disputes form one of the greatest, and most interesting, topics of Roman history. They called forth the vigour of the Roman character, on one side and the other; they were the occasion of laws which were not established without tremendous conflicts, but which remained for the good of both parties. They teach us that a nation,

like a man, has a constitution which passes through a number of shocks and youthful diseases, which only tend to bring out its vigour, and to show that one part of it cannot be healthy unless it is sustained by another.

These are lessons which Roman history has bequeathed to modern times; no country, I think, has profited by them, or may profit by them, more than England. But it has another set of lessons which are quite as important. There are diseases which may strengthen a man's constitution; there are diseases which prove mortal. So it is with a nation. You may trace the disease which was to be fatal to Rome, through all the stages of its life. The habits of authority and obedience produced the finest race of soldiers, the grandest military organization, that was ever seen in the world. There was a power in Rome to govern and organize a world; but there was the passion to use this power for conquest. There was the lust of appropriation. In that lay the certainty that great generals would aspire to dominion, over foreign tribes first, then over their own citizens. The struggle for order would become the factions of men fighting for supremacy; and the people, craving for the same thing that their rulers craved for, would become the instruments of their purposes. Then the feeling of power, which had been so closely connected with the feeling of relationship, of the father's protection of the son, of the son's obligation to the father, would become separated from

this, and would at last almost crush it; then the respect of the wife for the husband, of the husband for the wife, would depart;—there would be a dislocation of ties throughout all society. Then the religion of the priest would become a mere contrivance to keep up the State; he would no longer believe in the gods whom he worshipped; he would be a deceiver in all the acts connected with their service. A habit of insincerity would penetrate into the very root of the city's life; then some unprincipled general would be welcomed as a deliverer, even by good men,—nay, would be really a deliverer from the misery and crimes of heartless factions. He would try to rule partly by his army, partly by the reverence for old laws, partly by the arts and tricks of religion. In time the army would set laws at defiance; and a religion which stood upon a lie would be utterly useless to bind men, when no one cared to know and obey the truth.

All these results and warnings are written deeply and legibly in Roman history for our instruction. I say in the *history*. I have not spoken so much of its *books* of history, as I did of those which the Greeks wrote. It has noble writers of history. Livy, though he may have often misrepresented facts, either out of respect to great houses, or from confusions between two different reports of the same transaction, yet gives us, on the whole, a most lively picture of Roman feelings, and Roman life. His very errors teach us what his countrymen were occupied about, to what causes they

attributed their greatness, or their decay. Tacitus, whose history is a kind of dirge over the slavery into which Rome had fallen, and an anticipation of the ruin which its own armies must bring upon it, is still more valuable, and has supplied reflections to wise men in every country. Both these books interpret, more or less satisfactorily, the history of Rome;—the History itself lives in gigantic works; in laws, in the language and condition of every country in the modern world. Many books of Livy and of Tacitus have perished; it has been a great blessing to have preserved what we have preserved. But had they all gone, there would be signs and monuments everywhere to show us what the people of whom they speak must have been. Romans called their city an Eternal city. If they said that it had accomplished, and was still to accomplish, the purposes of an Eternal Mind, which will educate mankind, by the rise of cities or by their downfall, they would have spoken truly.

Of course Roman history, like Greek history, must make the condition of other countries, especially of those which came under their sway, more intelligible to us. We owe to Roman authority our principal knowledge of Carthage, which contended with it long, which it at last destroyed, which rose out of its ashes a Roman city. There is consolation in this recollection, since it shows that great cities, and great men, will make themselves known, even through the reports of their opponents. Livy evidently detested Hannibal,

the great Carthaginian general, yet his portrait of him exhibits him to us as a most accomplished military genius, a sincere patriot, a man of brilliant conceptions. So, again, our knowledge of Gaul, and of Britain, in their earliest stages, are due mainly to their conqueror Julius Cæsar. There are cases, however, in which Roman writers, even the most faithful and earnest, would have led us into the most utterly false impressions of the people who were under their country's yoke, if we had not other helps to ascertain the truth about them. For instance, Tacitus describes, vividly and powerfully, the insurrection of the Jewish nation against the Roman emperor; that leads him to repeat what he knows about its past condition. He no doubt meant to tell the truth, for he was a truthful man; but no misrepresentation of the facts can be more amusing, and even ridiculous, than his. Though there was a considerable, and even a rich, colony of Jews in Rome, he had never succeeded in getting any even tolerable information from them respecting their traditions, or their sacred books.

The Greeks were not so ignorant on this subject. Two centuries before the time of Tacitus, a king who reigned in the city of Alexandria, Ptolemy Philadelphus, had commanded a translation of the Jewish Scriptures to be made by learned Jews; that Greek translation had been widely diffused over the countries which Alexander the Great had subdued. A Greek monarch, who reigned in Syria, had tried to seize the copies of

the Scriptures which he found in Jerusalem, and to corrupt them, that he might introduce the Greek worship into Judæa. He had been defeated by Judas Maccabeus and his brethren; the Temple had been purified of the idols which had been brought into it; Jerusalem possessed for a while an independent government.

But the records of this age of Judæa possess only a slight interest for us; they had only a slight interest for their own time. The older records, those which the Alexandrian sages had rendered into Greek,—these constitute the third great element of Ancient History. I have reserved them for my last topic, though they are the oldest of the three, because I wish to consider how far they bear upon those inquiries with which we found Herodotus and the Greeks occupied—how far they are connected with any of the problems which are raised by the Roman annalists.

Two remarks occur to us when we open these books. They profess to be Histories—that is, records of the actual growth and unfolding of a particular nation—just as the books do which refer to Greece or Rome. Secondly, they contain no thoughts or speculations about Divine or invisible helpers who may be favourable or unfavourable to this nation, such as we find in Herodotus. They start at once with the announcement of a Divine Ruler; they represent Him as making Himself known to a shepherd in Palestine, and calling him out, that in him, and in his seed, all the families

of the earth may be blessed. The whole subsequent history has reference to the government and education of this family by the invisible Lord. He deals with it at first as a family simply. The members of it dwell in tents, live apart from cities, pursue the occupation of shepherds,—are squatters, as we should say in modern language, on a soil which they do not possess. They exhibit all the rude, wild passions of men in this condition, commit various crimes, quarrel with each other. They suffer for these transgressions, not by direct formal inflictions, but by the evil consequences which follow naturally from them. The family multiplies; it is invited into Egypt, has a settlement formed for it through the favour of an Egyptian king; it grows to be a horde. A successor of the king who had favoured it becomes suspicious of its position on his soil. He first attempts to destroy the males who are born in it; then succeeds a more elaborate scheme for turning the settlers to account, for reducing them to slaves, for using them in the great works which have made the kings of Egypt famous. A patriot appears out of one of the tribes; he kills an Egyptian oppressor; he has to fly. After forty years the God of his fathers appears to him in the desert, reveals Himself as One who cares for the slaves, has heard their cry, and declares that He will be their Deliverer.

The ground of the Jewish Nation is laid in this revelation. The God whom they worship is the "Deliverer." That is the Name by which they are to know Him.

They may not imagine Him in the likeness of anything they see or dream of; they are only to recollect Him, then and always, as setting them free. They are brought out of bondage. A Law is given them, warning them of the acts which have enslaved, and do enslave nations. As occasions arise, statutes are added dealing with special circumstances in the condition of an Oriental people. This remains the fundamental code of the Nation. They have various institutions established for them; the first, and chief, a feast to commemorate their deliverance. Like other nations, they have sacrifices, but the sacrifices are not to turn the Will of Him whom they worship, but to express His Will to be at one with them, and to put away the evil that they are conscious of. The priest who performs the sacrifice is not allowed to devise any plans of his own; he is simply to be a witness of the reconciliation of which he gives this token.

The Israelites are divided into tribes and families. Their military organization is dependent on this family arrangement. Each man encamps under the standard of the house of his father.

They march into the land which has been promised them; they drive out a race which has become intolerable. The land is distributed according to their tribes; they show no signs of excellence when they are established in it; they fall into all kinds of divisions. They show the propensities which the Greeks displayed, only without their wit and refinement; they have all

their inclination for sensual, visible worship. They sink into slavery. Chiefs are raised, out of one or other of their tribes, to be their deliverers; they are heroes for that service; ordinarily they are just like other men. A more settled government is established. There are organized judges. In time they desire a king to lead their armies. They experience all the misery of self-willed tyranny. The Nation is broken by its enemies. A better ruler who cares for his people restores them. He rules in the name of the unseen King and Deliverer; though he often does acts of shameful injustice and oppression, which bring down upon him the just and natural retribution of popular revolt. There is a wise and peaceful king who spreads the fame and dominion of Israel over various lands. He becomes an idolater and oppressor. After his death the tribes fall into two hostile camps; a new capital is established in Samaria. There is a succession of kings in both divisions of the kingdom, who encourage superstition and moral degradation. Now and then a reformer appears, who restores the faith and energy of the land. At last the great Assyrian power descends upon the northern kingdom and carries its inhabitants captive, according to the custom of those monarchs. The southern kingdom is threatened. It has a king who, amidst some weakness and occasional tendency to seek help from Egypt, trusts in God, and defies the invader of the land. Jerusalem is saved. A profligate successor reduces it again to perdition.

After a fruitless attempt at reformation its inhabitants are carried to Babylon; the Temple is destroyed, the city is laid waste. The captivity endures till the Babylonian empire is overthrown by the Medes and Persians. Then the Jews are permitted to return to their land. They rebuild their city and the Temple. Their polity and worship are restored.

Here is a continuous history. We sometimes call it a "religious" history. I have shown you that that name does not belong to it more than it belongs to Greek or Roman history; they are both religious histories, if you mean that religion mixes with all the commonest transactions in which the people are engaged—that they could not contemplate their life apart from Divine government and protection. If, on the other hand, you turn to the Jewish history, you find that its most solemn warnings are directed against kings and priests who believed themselves to be very religious, who established altars for the sake of pacifying, or propitiating, a Power that they believed might do them injury. The great difference between this History and both the others, as I have remarked already, is that it starts from no conceptions of men as to beings who may do them good and injury; it starts from the assertion of the Being who seeks wholly and simply to do good, to form a Nation, to keep it at one, to deliver it from the bondage which it brings upon itself, or into which other men may bring it. The prophets who are the interpreters of this History, who

brought, home the meaning of it to the minds of their countrymen, enforce this lesson continually. They exist to enforce it. They affirm that a just and righteous Being is ruling over them, that injustice and unrighteousness of all kinds are hateful to Him; that these must bring curses upon a land, in whatever form they are exhibited—in whomsoever, king, priest, or man, they appear; that their Lord is seeking to deliver them out of these curses by delivering them from the evils which are the source of them; that all the punishment at home, and the captivity abroad, is a discipline which is ministering to this end.

If you ask me whether all the blessings of which these teachers speak were not blessings to their own race, I answer, first, that the primary announcement of the record is, that this race was chosen out especially to be a blessing to all the families of the earth; secondly, that every step of this history is a witness that the Jews, instead of being picked specimens of humanity, exhibited its roughest and coarsest grain; thirdly, that the prophets are continually setting forth to the Jews the hope of a deliverance of all nations, of the discovery of their God to all nations, as the only one which could be the least cheering or satisfactory to themselves. And there is one more answer, that this nation did believe itself to be separated from all nations, not to be their blessing but their curse, and that the result of that conviction was such a signal overthrow of their city and nation as did not befall any Greek city, or

the city of Rome, or any other of which we have the report.

I do, then, look upon the history of this Nation, not as an isolated one, but as the key to the rest of Ancient History, as that which explains to us why Ancient History is the history of distinct nations, and what was the source of their strength, and what was the cause of their downfall. As long as there are nations in the modern world, so long I believe these records of Greece, of Rome, of Judæa, must always be the lesson-books; and that the one of which I have spoken last must be used to clear the difficulties of the other two, and to remove the despair which, taken by themselves, they would engender. But they have all three suggested to us the thought of something that is deeper and more universal, than national life. They have all contained the testimony of a human life, of a life which is common to all the nations of the earth. They assure us that it must be; they do not show us under what conditions it can be. Unlike as the Latins and Greeks are, Plutarch says, there is a bond between them, a ground of comparison between their great men. Rome aspires to hold the nations in one. The prophets of the Old Testament say that God has created them for a unity which He would reveal. How any of these expectations have been fulfilled, or may be fulfilled; that, I believe, is the question which Modern History investigates—of which it is somehow to find the answer.

VII.

ENGLISH HISTORY.[1]

THE History of England, how it may be read to most advantage, is the subject I have proposed for your consideration this evening. Do not let the terms in which I have stated it alarm you. I do not design to enter into a long disquisition about History in general, or our own History in particular. I shall not suggest any new method of reading it, to disturb all the methods which one or another of you has been accustomed to follow. My object is altogether different. I have seen others puzzled, I have been puzzled myself, by a number of different plans which have been suggested for studying History, by a number of different warnings not to adopt this plan or that, because it can lead to no good. One tells me that the old plan of attending to the reigns of the Kings, and the succession of Dynasties, is quite obsolete. One says that what we call our Constitutional Histories are tiresome and useless; they give us much philo-

[1] Delivered at the Working Men's College, Great Ormond Street, 1866.

sophical discourse, but few facts. A third says that a History of the People, of their manners and customs, is the only valuable history, or that it is not valuable at all—that we can get nothing out of it. Some of my cloth will say that all history should be Ecclesiastical History; some will say that we should keep as clear of that as possible, if we would not pervert all secular records, and all evidence. Again, we are warned to keep clear of this book, for it is written by a Tory, who will certainly cheat us with notions of Prerogative and Divine Right; of that book, for it will show us all men and all questions through Whig glasses; of a third, for it will be certain to make us Democrats. Then the variety of our resources is turned against us. The materials for history have become so numerous, so interminable, who can hope to master even a few of them? We spend our time in determining those which we need not think of; so there is not much left for those that we deem to be worthy of our attention. Then, we are making history so fast, that it becomes a doubt with us whether we have any leisure for that which is made. What can a man with a little leisure do but read the newspapers? Till we have mastered the doings of Queen Victoria, who will turn to Queen Elizabeth?

These, I believe, are real hindrances and perplexities to many of us. I shall be heartily glad if I should be able this evening to remove two or three of them.

First, I will speak of those conflicting methods which offer themselves to us, and one or another of which

we suppose we must accept, to the rejection of the rest. May I, or may I not, learn my old rhymes about—

> "William the Conqueror long did reign,
> William his son by an arrow was slain"?

or, shall I resolve that William the Conqueror, and William Rufus, do not concern us at all? that all we have to do with are great epochs, like the Magna Charta, the Reformation, the Civil Wars, the Revolution? One has often been tempted to that opinion. Surely, we have said to ourselves, these individual monarchs are not better, some of them much worse, many of them much feebler, than their neighbours. What right have they to be remembered, when a number of much worthier people are forgotten? That is a plausible kind of speech; but I am satisfied it is not sound speech. Whatever these men were, their good or their evil has had an importance for England, has had an importance for England at this day, which we cannot measure. We do not gain more insight into the worth of their subjects by overlooking them; we shall understand the worth of their subjects much more if we frankly acknowledge the position they have held, and the influence they have exercised." I doubt greatly whether ours is not the country in Europe which received most of blessing, and most of mischief, from its sovereigns; whether those countries which are governed by absolute rules have not been really less practically influenced by them than we have been. I will not go over the

different steps by which I have been led to a conclusion apparently so paradoxical. But I will endeavour to show you that a much higher authority, one which we shall all acknowledge to be a higher one, bears witness that our old way of reading History, the one into which we were adopted when we were children, is one in which we may persevere with the greatest profit when we become men.

Whatever we may think of Shakespeare's Plays as guides to a knowledge of English History, I think most people will confess that they have learnt more about the different persons who have acted in that history from them than from any other source. The men and women whom he shows us are not names or shadows, but such as we at once recognize, such as we are sure must have been. They are men of all characters, classes, degrees, professions; but Shakespeare always begins from the king. The titles of his plays are not chosen unfairly, or by accident. He does not put King John, King Richard II., King Henry IV. in the front of the battle, and then exhibit to us some of the more striking events, or the more remarkable people, of their times. The kings are the prominent figures in the drama; the others all stand in some relation to them. Mr. Knight indeed thinks that young Arthur is the hero of Shakespeare's "King John." It may be so. An artist may find that the little boy is the centre of the group, that all the other personages fall into their places about him. But it seems to me that

Shakespeare's art was true to facts; that though he may violate the mere chronology of them, he never disposes them, or those who were concerned in them, otherwise than he judged from the books he read that they had been disposed in the real world. He found an ugly, disagreeable object, the most prominent object in England at the beginning of the thirteenth century. That prominent place it retains on the stage. The uncle is not introduced to set off the nephew; the nephew enables us to understand the uncle. And not only the nephew. King John's character brings out the character of the King of France; and of Pandulph, the Pope's legate; and of Constance, Arthur's mother; and of Elinor, his own mother; and of Faulconbridge, the likeness of his brother Richard; of Hubert, his agent; of the English Barons, Pembroke and Salisbury; and many more besides. If John had been thrown into the background, or had been made better or worse than he was, each of these would have come out in false proportions, in a wrong light. Shakespeare has given us a John whom we can believe in; a villain, but not an all-black villain; one whose baseness comes out by degrees as opportunities for evil doings occur; who might have passed for a courageous assertor of his royal dignity, if the gloss and varnish of his professions had not been rubbed off in temptation. Such a man explains the occurrences of his reign better than a hundred discourses could have explained them. We do not want to be taken

to Runnymede, and to be shown how the Barons wrung the Charter from him. That might have made a good scene for a melodrama, or have furnished an excuse for very eloquent harangues; but for the history it is much more important to know what sort of man the King was; how he was likely to lose the affection and allegiance of his lords; how they were likely to act when they were estranged from him. That Shakespeare has had insight to perceive; that he helps us to perceive. We may want other information hereafter, but we may be very thankful for this.

You may see from this instance how a very unkingly King—about the last, one would have thought, that a poet would have chosen for his subject—may nevertheless influence the transactions of a period, and bind them together. Shakespeare appears as if he had almost intended to force this lesson upon us. The very next play in his English series to that of "John" is "Richard II.," a still more desperate undertaking than the former, if an heroic man was wanted. There is actually no hero, or heroine, in the whole poem. It is throughout the picture of a weak, helpless ruler, and a weak, helpless age. Richard cannot govern; his nobles cannot obey. They charge each other with lying, and treachery; they are ready to fight on that issue; he gives them leave, then withdraws it, and banishes them. Kinghood in his hand becomes mere reckless indulgence. The land is farmed for his debts; the estates of his uncle are confiscated; his cousin

comes from exile to claim them; he becomes the popular champion. The King has a vague sense that there is a divinity hedging him round; that, somehow, rebellion cannot overtake him. But it does overtake him. He utters eloquent speeches; but he cannot act. Only in suffering, something nobler comes forth in him. He who, when the world went well with him, was a mere child and fool, in prison and in death shows that he had a heart with which we can sympathise. It is the story of a broken man, a dilapidated and exhausted period. But it is a perfectly true picture; and the truth of it arises from Shakespeare's perception, that the ruler and his people correspond to each other; and that, when they sow the wind together, they will reap the whirlwind together.

The following reign of Henry IV. is altogether unlike this, full of action and interest. The King is again the type and pattern of his subjects. His head lies uneasily; he cannot persuade sleep to visit him. The Prince must spend his superfluous energies in robberies on Gad's Hill. All the nobles in the north, Scotch and English, are in commotion; Hotspur must be always on horseback; Glendower hears all the spirits in the vasty deep beckoning him to recover the Welsh Border; even Falstaff must quit Eastcheap, and his jests, and lead his ragged corps to Shrewsbury. The play of "Henry IV." is a drama according to the true force of the word. All are doing.

Again, in "Henry V.," the nation's strength, and the

nation's evil, are gathered up in the King. In his wild days he has established a sympathy with his people. They like the man who can pass so rapidly from the Boar's Head riots to the invasion of France. He is entirely their master; yet he is one with them; able to assume the common soldier, mix in their ranks, acquaint himself with the opinions of his host, and then go forth with them to endure all risks of defeat, and to give them confidence of victory. And yet I do not think the splendour of Agincourt is so full of this lesson as the time of discomfiture, commotion, and civil war, which follows. The weak, good, boy-sovereign is in a most remarkable sense the centre of all that strife. His presence is felt through every stage of it. He cannot compose it in the least. He has not a notion of composing it. He has not a notion of asserting his royalty, or of compelling others to obey; but he has the most entire wish to be right, the most humble sense of his own incapacity. That sense grows with his growth. All the turbulent spirits gather about him; his wife tyrannizes over him; York becomes his rival. He remains a witness—a real witness, however ineffectual for the time—that there is a Divine order which is higher than all the fierce wills and self-seeking purposes of men, and will at last subdue them to itself.

If I went on to the play of "Richard III.," who winds up the Plantagenet period, and whose supernatural villany is the means of avenging its crimes, and of

bringing in a better era—still more, if I spoke of "Henry VIII.," the one drama of the Tudor period, I might show you how much Shakespeare has done for the illustration of every part of our annals, by adhering strictly to what I may call his "Royal" method. The last example is a specially strong one. As we hear nothing directly of the Great Charter in his "King John," so we hear nothing directly of the Reformation in his "Henry VIII."

Henry VIII., the mover of the English Reformation, whose assertion of his own supremacy was the protest against the Roman supremacy, is brought out fully and distinctly before us; not as a monster, not as a hero, but as a monarch with a resolute will, with a conscience and inclination often at variance, often strangely confused; capable of doing justice, capable of gross injustice. And Katharine, the best and purest lady of the old time; Anne Boleyn, a lively representation of the new time; Wolsey, the most splendid of the worldly Churchmen, of whom the nobles and the people for different reasons are wearied; Cranmer, suspected as a heretic by them, upheld by the King's belief in his honesty; a number of other figures, all contributing to the pageants of the time, all exhibiting its solemn and tragical character, stand about the throne in various relations to the sovereign. He who will study them in that position, grouped as Shakespeare has grouped them, will obtain hints respecting the great movement of the age which neither those

who contemplate it simply from the Protestant, or simply from the Romanist, point of view, can give him.

I do not say for a moment that we ought to be satisfied with this way of considering King John's age or King Henry's age. I merely maintain that it is a good way, and that no other which has yet been discovered will enable us to dispense with it. Shakespeare has taught us not to choose out dainty bits of our national records, and to feed exclusively upon them. He has shown us that any period, the most apparently flat and dull, the most turbulent and bewildering, contains its lesson, and will give out that lesson if we deal fairly with it, and do not force it into conformity with our own notions. He has shown us that each reign has a certain completeness, that it can be considered as an integral portion of a Divine drama. He has shown us, at the same time, that the reigns are inseparably linked together; that the events of one grow out of those of the other; that every one is scattering some seed of curses or blessings which another will have to gather in. He has made us feel that no varieties in the vegetable or animal kingdom can equal the varieties which a passage of human history reveals, if we only watch the one as a naturalist watches the other. But he shows us also the uniformity amidst the variety; that men of former centuries are like, in essentials, to those who are walking the earth and taking part in the affairs of kingdoms now. And

that neither then nor now could they arrange things as they liked, or alter laws and principles because they found them inconvenient.

If Shakespeare's historical plays have helped us to make these discoveries, we can apply them in cases where we have not his guidance. A man of genius does us good just so far as he makes us see things more truly, more as they are. If he puts himself, or his own opinions, or his wit, between us and the things, he does us harm. I believe Shakespeare has done this less than most of those whom we call historians; therefore, though I am glad to profit by their corrections of his mistakes, I think on the whole he has set us on a better track of investigation than the most popular of them have done.

I will allude to one of them, the one who, some will think, deserves the title of a "Royalist" historian much better than Shakespeare does. David Hume began his English History from the time of our Stuart princes; about them he said he found that there was most of party misrepresentation. His business as a philosopher was to clear that misrepresentation away. What he meant was this: He disliked intensely the Covenanters of his own land, and the English Puritans. He liked Charles I. because he resisted them, and because he was a patron of letters and of art. The Whig party, which was in ascendency in the days of George II., was also displeasing to Hume; partly because Sir Robert Walpole, their chief Minister, was

indifferent about literature, partly because their political maxims were not in accordance with those which he had learnt both in Scotland and France. Hume was quite as much of a Frenchman as a Scotchman; he had formed his mind under French influence. Now the French philosophers of the eighteenth century hoped much from monarchs in the war they were waging against priests; popular assemblies—even such semi-popular assemblies as the Parliaments of France—they suspected. Hume, therefore, came back from that country with all his Stuart feeling, all his dislike of the Covenanters, strongly reinforced. They had spoken of a Divine government as higher than any earthly government. In such a government Hume had no belief; he desired to destroy any thought or dream of it in his countrymen. He found that the Covenanters had been ready to fight and die for a conviction. That struck him as an idle and fantastic enthusiasm, which a man of a quiet temperament and philosophical habit of mind ought to discourage and scorn. In this spirit he wrote the first volumes of his work, upon the model of which all the rest was formed. He held a brief for Charles I. against the English Parliament and the Scotch Covenanters. No one could have pleaded more dexterously in support of his client. He contended, that whatever breaches of law and stretches of prerogative could be alleged against him had been committed by previous sovereigns; the notion of violating a Constitution was absurd. Where was the Constitu-

tion? If it was on paper, it had gone for nothing when any strong will, like that of Henry VIII. or Elizabeth, had been disposed to set it aside.

These arguments made Hume for a short time unpopular. They set at nought doctrines which the Whigs of that day and their predecessors had always contended for; the nation was not prepared to abandon them. But in a few years the booksellers found the copies which they had supposed to be unreadable vanishing from their counters. Failure gave place to an unparalleled success. Hume's History established itself as the History of England to be read by all gentlemen, and to be taught in all schools. I remember reading some years ago, in a periodical of high reputation and authority, if I do not mistake in the *Quarterly Review*, the broad assertion, that no other can ever take its place; that Englishmen as little want a new Constitution as they want a substitute for Hume's History.

That comparison was specially unfortunate; for Hume, whatever be his other merits, is emphatically the "unconstitutional" historian. One would call him the ingenious advocate for attacks upon the Constitution, supposing he had entertained the least faith that a Constitution existed, that it was not a mere name or fiction. It is Hume's work which has been the chief impulse to the class of works on English History which are called Constitutional. They have been mainly written to show that what he deemed a

fiction was a reality; that its principles and its growth can be traced; that, however often it might have been assaulted in one time or other, the acts which assaulted it were wrong acts, and were felt to be wrong; that the Parliaments of Charles the First's time were perfectly right in appealing to old charters which testified against these acts; that if those Parliaments themselves, or one of them, afterwards committed breaches of the Constitution, it did at last vindicate itself both against Parliament and the King. Evidence was given that there is a Code which binds them both, and which neither can trample upon with impunity. Histories written with this object, or with some such object as this, have, it seems to me, a very great value. When they are undertaken by men of such large erudition, such conscientious diligence, and such calm, judicious minds, as the late Mr. Hallam, they must be full of precious instruction for all kinds of people. But even less careful students and thinkers than he was have done exceedingly good service by the light which they have thrown upon one and another passage of our annals, and of our laws; by the clear evidence which they have brought to show, that English liberty is not something to be talked of in school-boy themes, or in speeches at hustings; that it has a substantial meaning, and that each generation has accepted it as an inheritance which it was to maintain and to transmit. This constitutional mode of treating history is unquestionably opposed to the Humean

mode of treating it. But I believe the Humean method is even more directly opposed to the Shakespearian method. I do not find that Hume's King has anything like the same position with the Shakespearian King. He is simply the antagonist of his Parliament or his people. He neither comes forth himself with any distinctness, nor does he throw any clear light upon those around him. With all the skill of Hume in defending Charles I. from attacks and objections, he does not inspire us with as much interest for him as Shakespeare awakens in us for so poor a creature as Richard II. It is difficult in any part of Hume's History to find any man, or any woman, whom simply as such one can reverence or love. Their actions are reported in a most flowing, agreeable style. The historian makes many sage observations about them; but we do not know them at all, or care for them; and it is difficult to believe that the historian did either.

On the other hand, there is no contradiction between Shakespeare's "kingly" Histories and the true "constitutional" Histories. They supply what he has left blank. They help us to understand how the Kings' reigns came to be so significant, so full of eminent actors and sufferers, as he shows us that they were. These Histories interpret the fact that kings like John, in spite of their own meanness, give each a colour to their time, and in some measure determine what its character shall be. And by bringing the two together,

and using them each for its own purpose, we correct some exaggerations into which those who adhere exclusively to either frequently fall. Thus, for instance, Lord Macaulay has said that our history properly begins with King John, because that is the reign in which the Charter was won. Now that opinion, it seems to me, destroys the very meaning of the Charter; for the Charter speaks of rights which already belong to Englishmen, and of which the King had no business to deprive them. If it had made that right which had been wrong before, we should not reverence it as we do; nor would the King have stooped his neck to receive it. We must not start from King John if we would understand what King John was obliged to do. We must see how a law was established by the Roman legions when they made roads, raised walls, turned their camps into towns and workshops, set up courts of justice for our Celtic ancestors; how a deeper order which is expressed in domestic institutions, in the reverence of husbands and wives, and of fathers and children, came forth amidst all the wildness of the Saxons, and was the basis of their freedom; how law and order are connected with the Message of the Kingdom of God and the work of Christian Missionaries; how the Norman, even when he proclaimed himself a conqueror, was obliged to acknowledge a stronger law, a firmer order, than had existed before, one from which he could not exempt himself unless he could exempt his vassals from it. Then we shall see what the

Charter was, and why it extended farther and embraced more classes than its framers might have wished; why it became a document of freedom to all succeeding generations. And so we escape another fault which is sometimes imputed to these "constitutional" Histories. They are said to be dry and formal records rather of legislation and political alterations than of that which men did and had endured. That charge will in no wise apply to them, if we associate them with the other kind of Histories; then they will be full of life. If, for instance, we asked ourselves, how did these nobles, whom we find growing so restive under King John, acquire the power to control his movements? how did these ecclesiastics, whose revenues he plundered and whose spiritual mastery he defied, acquire those revenues or obtain that mastery? we should be led back into the constitution of the Feudal monarchies, and see what part the kings, and the nobles, and the priests bore in them; how each checked the other; how each bore witness to the other of old customs and fixed principles which they could not transgress; and numbers of stories, which lie scattered about in old books, of fierce words and deeds spoken or acted by one or the other, would come in to show us what this Constitution meant, and how each class of men chafed at the bit and tried to get it out of their mouths, and how, if either of them succeeded, there came an anarchy, and then how out of the anarchy order rose again, but with new enemies to contend against it. And if we

asked further, what was to come out of this strife of Kings and Barons, and whether they were to be ever at peace, or whether they were to be alone in their battles, the next reign would give us an answer full of striking incidents, and a deep moral. Henry III. swears to observe the Charter to which his father had sworn. He breaks his oath. He offends his English nobles by choosing French favourites. One of these, De Montfort, becomes their leader in opposition to him. Soon he looks farther than the Barons. He summons Knights of the shire and Burgesses of the town, to consult with them. The Parliament assumes a new shape. A Commons' House is joined to it. The rebellion of Leicester introduces the most important of all developments in the English Constitution. That development would have been impossible if other changes had not taken place first. The old Saxon population, deprived of their lands, have become the tradesmen and citizens of the English towns. A middle-class has grown up consisting mainly of them; they have obtained charters and formed corporations. They speak the old language of the country. That language, crushed under the foreign speech of the Court, has risen again, strengthened by its mixture with that, and with the Latin which is taught in the schools. The English Commons have found their English tongue, and so they are able to make their voices heard in an English Council of the Wise. Though a rebel has first summoned them, the kings

who succeed claim their presence. They count it a hardship; for they are summoned to London chiefly to impose taxes on the people who send them. By degrees they become conscious of their power; those who lay on taxes can complain of grievances. They exercise the right in various ways. The monarchs feel the new power. Sometimes it is a restraint upon them; sometimes they are glad of it, for it is a check upon the power of the nobles; still more it is a check upon the power of the clergy. For this new estate, which represents the towns and the yeomen of the soil, has been influenced by the preaching of Wycliffe and of the English secular or parish clergy, who mix with the people; who dislike the friars and foreigners; who dislike the higher ecclesiastical orders as worldly. The Commons' House, even if it sometimes is content to pass statutes against heretics, yet shows honest jealousy of continental priests, and is very glad to tax those who have large revenues. They are glad to work with the kings for these objects; to thwart them when they are not strictly national. They gladly second the efforts of Henry VIII. to set himself free from the yoke of Rome, even though by doing so they may strengthen his prerogative. They are heart and soul with Elizabeth, let her notions of her own power be ever so lofty, whilst they feel that that power is used to assert her position as an English Queen, their position as an English people. But they become the stout antagonists of the sovereign's power the moment it begins

to be asserted, as they suppose it to be by the Stuarts, for its own sake and not for the nation's sake.

There is a profound interest in tracing these steps in our constitutional history, which are regular and consistent, though they are so unlike each other, and which come out best and most clearly in a number of special incidents, and which illustrate the temper and feelings of the men who are concerned in them, and of the times in which they occurred. Vague declamations about the growth of Institutions do not help us half so much as the deeds and words of the men who watched this growth, and tried wisely or ignorantly to hasten it or hinder it. No one has done more to show us this than the eminent man whose dictum about King John's reign I have disputed. Lord Macaulay, "constitutional" writer as he is, has helped us to read the History of the Revolution by giving a prominence and a worth to the character of William III. which it had never received from any previous historian. We have a person at the centre of the epoch. We see him setting in movement the best efforts of the age, controlling the most turbulent parties of the age.

But I said that some writers in our day were impatient of both these kinds of History, the Royal and the Constitutional, and wanted what they called a "People's History" to be a substitute for them. It is all very well, they say, for mere amusement, to read these dramas about the acts of kings. "We may learn, as you say, something about other human characters

while we consider theirs; good, no doubt, may come from knowing how the Nobles in old times, how the Commons in later times, wrestled for privileges or rights, and won them. But the great mass in every period—what do we learn of them from studying these few people, who were connected more or less closely with the Court? What have all these fights done for their condition?" These are questions which ought to be asked, and which, I think, can in some measure be answered. But we shall not get the answer, I suspect, if we sever the people's history from the other histories; if we try to make it a thing by itself. We must settle this maxim in our minds. That which is inorganic cannot be described. The moment any class or any country becomes organized, or seeks to become so, it acquires a history; you can speak of it, and write of it. I may lament that such little countries as Greece or Italy should usurp such a large portion of the records of the old world; that enormous continents should lie almost in entire shadow, and should only just become known to us by the light which is thrown on them by these small races. But it cannot be otherwise. These societies had a life and an order, or were trying for one. That brings them within our observation. We can contemplate them as parts of a human society; not as a mere collection of atoms that are struggling against each other. If we attend to this maxim, we shall not murmur, as at first we may very naturally do, because History

seems to include so few figures, and to cover so small a ground. But, on the other hand, we shall feel the most extreme desire that it should take in more figures, and cover a larger ground. We shall understand that the Royal records, and the Constitutional Histories, do not merely concern the persons whose names stand forward in them. All those who have done anything worth doing have been intentionally, or unintentionally, working for others besides themselves; working for the whole land in which they dwelt; working for generations unborn. No one purpose which they achieved could be limited by the circle for which they framed it; no principle which they asserted could be confined by their notions of what it meant. The framers of the Magna Charta may have been barons or ecclesiastics. But the laws which they affirmed for their protection worked afterwards for the protection and the elevation of the lowest serf. Do not suppose, then, that we must repeat the History that has been accomplished, that we must re-write the History that has been written in our land, in order that we may do justice to this subject, in order that we may give it all the prominence which is due to it. If we take that course, the People's History will become a mere remonstrance and denunciation,—a perpetual attempt to show why things should have been other than they have been; that is to say, no history at all, merely a new scheme of the universe, an effort of imagination to conceive a country which

has not been, and which I rather fancy would have been utterly intolerable if it could have been. Whereas, if we accept the older method as our starting-point, we may be continually inquiring what the Kings or Parliaments were doing, or were not doing, to make the body of the people sharers in the blessings of the land, citizens in the full sense of that word. Such an inquiry would involve the history of all the steps which led to the abolition of serfdom in England, the records of our Poor-law legislation, an account of agrarian tumults, and the efforts to suppress them or remove the occasions of them; all accounts that can be obtained of municipal government, and of the ways in which men became freeholders in the counties, or freemen in the towns. It would contain a great chapter on the foundations of our schools, and on the efforts which have been made from the earliest time to bring one or another class under education; it would involve all illustrations that could be got of the domestic life of our people, anything that would show how far they were becoming capable of national organization by realizing that organization which there is in every household. What individuals or legislation had done, therefore, to make their houses more habitable, their homes more like home, would be a part of this subject. To discover what had been the popular feeling of any time as indicated by the ballads, pictures, plays, that were current in that time; what influences of this kind were acting upon

the lower class from the upper classes, what were proceeding from itself, would be one of the most important objects of the historian. With this must be combined an examination of those great effects which were produced by the Mendicant Friars in the thirteenth century, by Wycliffe and the Lollards in the fourteenth and fifteenth, by Latimer and the Reforming Preachers who addressed themselves directly to the people in the sixteenth century, by the Puritans in the seventeenth, by the Methodists in the eighteenth; together with all the more ordinary and regular effects that were produced by parochial ministrations.

I have included this last subject in the Popular History, though you would say, perhaps, that it belongs more properly to the last class of histories which I named, the Ecclesiastical. I have done so because my object throughout has been to show you that these classes, though they may be distinguished, cannot be separated, and that each is ruined and made useless by the attempt to give it an exclusive character. To no kind of histories, I conceive, does that remark more strictly apply than to the one about which I have now to say a very few words. If the Ecclesiastic endeavours to divorce his subject from the general life of the country, from the story of its Kings, its Parliaments, the body of its people, the result will be that he exhibits the Church as a corporation which has interests different from all these, opposed to them all. He will then become

a very miserable apologist for failures and sins that ought to be confessed; or he will try to throw the blame of them upon persons whom he treats as enemies. And these enemies will be continually multiplying. Not only Kings, Statesmen, Parliaments, will be complained of as obstructing the purposes of the Church, or interfering with its rights; all schools and parties, except the one to which the historian belongs, will be called in to account for the evils which it has not cured, to explain why the powers with which it has been entrusted have not effected what they might have effected. Now, it seems to me, that if the Church historian was faithful to his own maxim, faithful to the precedent which he regards, or should regard, with most reverence, he would take the course which is the most opposite to this. The last thing that a Jewish prophet would have thought of was to make apologies for his own order, or for the order of priests, or to separate their interests or their wrong-doings from those of the kings, of their advisers, or of the whole land. That which he had to do was, to bear witness of a Divine and Righteous Power, higher than kings or their advisers; a Power always exerting itself for the moral good and renovation of the land, which king, and priests, and prophets might obey or might resist; with which they might cooperate, or which they might thwart; but which would work out its purposes by means of them, or in spite of them. And Ecclesiastical History written with this

conviction, under the power of this belief, could not be a party history; it must be a witness against the party tendencies of the writer, and of all other persons whatever. He must be more on the watch against them in himself than in anyone else. He must be glad to hail the good in each party which has kept it alive and made it necessary, and saved it from being merely a check on the good of every other. So he will be able to welcome the services which the priests of the Middle Ages rendered to society by their conflicts with the usurpations of the kings; and the service which the kings rendered to society by their battles with the usurpations of the priests. He will hail every influence, proceeding from Dominican or Franciscan, which bore witness that the poor man had a spirit within him to which Divine words could reach; he will detest influences proceeding from the same men just where they tended to degrade the poor man's spirit and make him their victim and slave. He will recognize every power that went forth from the Church to assert the serf as a brother, and so to break his chains; he will regard every effort to put another kind of chain upon him as a treason against the principles of the Church, as an act of Atheism. He will welcome the efforts of any Reformers who tried to break these chains in the Divine Name. He will be sure, that as soon as they begin to set up in their own name, and to conquer with this name, they must become impostors and oppressors. So far as the

priests bore witness of a universal and everlasting order which binds all men, and which they cannot break through without destroying themselves, so far he would see in him a great upholder of constitutional order in every land; so far as the priest set up his own self-will, or the self-will of any monarch, against such a constitution, so far, by the same rule, he must be a transgressor. If in the strength which he declares to be Divine, he combats with all forms of wrong and injustice, and sacrifices himself in the struggle, he must be worthy of the highest honour; if he pretends that the evil is stronger than the good, if he enters into compact with it, and makes use of it for his own advancement, he must be more guilty than all others.

I have thus endeavoured to show you that the different methods of writing English history which have been presented for our choice need not be rivals; that we want them all; that each, rightly used—used, I mean, in conformity with its own pretensions—will illustrate the rest; and I would say just the same about the opinions of different writers. It does not seem to me that we need have that fear of Tories, or Whigs, or Democrats, which some entertain. If each of them tells us frankly what he believes, if he brings before us what he has seen, and admires and loves, we may be very thankful to him; we may be sure that he is doing his best, that he is giving us the help which he was meant to give. The Whigs of his day found fault with Hume for reverencing and "drop-

ping a generous tear" for the sorrows of Charles I. and Strafford. I find no such fault with him. "Generous tears" can do no harm. I think he indulged in many ungenerous sneers at the enemies of Charles I. and of Strafford; that he did no justice to their purposes and their sufferings. I wish he had twenty royal heroes instead of one. It is the utter want of belief in anything heroic, of reverence for any man, that one mourns in him. It is this, I hold, by which he has done injury to the sons and daughters of England. But I do not want to commence a crusade against his History. For its clever special pleading, for its exquisitely easy style, it is entitled to all the respect it has received. It will do no one any harm who has learned in his father's house, or from other teachers, that there is something in earth and heaven which is worth living and dying for. It may do him good, as the drunkenness of the helots did the young Spartans good, by inspiring him with a dread of utter indifference and scepticism.

And as with the Royalist, so with the Constitutional, Historians. A very little allowance—less than our natural suspicion disposes us to make—will save us from any false impressions which their partiality for individual men might make upon us. Everyone is on his guard against Lord Macaulay's defence of William III. in the case of the Massacre of Glencoe, or of his jobs in behalf of the favourite, Portland. If the author had been less ingenious in his apologies for them, they

would have detracted less in our minds from the real fame of his hero. Whenever he is truly in love with a man or with a principle, I would trust him in the main, and try to keep up with his admiration; but I would not trust his portrait of Marlborough. That is not credible. There may have been all the covetousness, all the baseness, in his character which he imputes to it; but there must have been something else, something which the biographer has not seen, or the man could not have done what he did. I give you these instances in support of a doctrine which I know is not generally accepted, but which I think will bear to be tested—that negative opinions and bitter antipathies are what impose upon us most mischievously; that positive beliefs, if they be ever so vehement, cordial sympathies, if they be ever so extravagant, will contribute elements of knowledge, of interest, of hope, to our studies, which would otherwise be flat and dreary. We do not want a neutral sort that is neither Tory, Whig, nor Democratic; we want each in its strength, each to tell us something that is not in the other.

But is not history becoming hopeless and interminable? Is not every subject—literature, physical science, art, legislation, military tactics—growing to be a part of it? Who can dream of mastering all the principles, all the details, which are necessary for the thorough understanding of a few years; to say nothing of a reign, or the annals of a country? No one, surely. But there are two sides to this objection. Beneath the

theoretical difficulty there lies a practical advantage. Every subject has so much to do with history, that every man who is devoted to any subject, whose business is mainly with that, has a road which leads him to history, has a point of affinity with all the transactions of his land. If art, trade, physical science, military tactics, have all to do with it; the artist, the tradesman, the student of physics, the soldier, may each claim his right in the history, may each bring his contribution to it. Beginning the study from his own topic, working at it for the sake of that, he finds himself unawares in contact with the friends whose occupations are the most alien from his; he is asking their help, they are asking his.

By this means the professional writer becomes less of a pedant, while he feels much more the dignity of his profession. And we feel that we learn more of history from him than from one who has no special calling, because he writes it dramatically. It is for him something that is done, not merely that is talked about. We civilians understand, I think, the retreat of Corunna better from Sir Charles Napier's narrative of it than we could do from anyone who had not been an eye-witness, or was a less competent eye-witness. And the hero of Scinde can afford to tell us of his own fears at that time as no less brave man could. A commercial man who would take us through his campaigns in times of success and of panic must in like manner be a great instructor

respecting that which concerns the whole body politic, as well as respecting the trials of its particular members. We need not read all that they say; but each one gives us some hints which make the general course of our history more intelligible. And the antiquary and the critic of documents find each his own proper place. We have not time to bestow on mere prosers; but the Dryasdusts may pick up real gems amidst heaps of rubbish; critics may sometimes give us such knowledge as will convict all who have gone before them of ignorance.

Least of all need we be dismayed by the last complaint to which I alluded, that we have no time for the records of the past because we are so busy with the present. If, indeed, we mean that we have acquired such a habit of craving for some new thing that we cannot tolerate anything that is old, that is a serious disease, a disease which will prove fatal to any nation which does not seek some timely cure of it. If we mean that we find the exclusive study of newspapers continually aggravating this tendency, and moreover taking away from us the capacity for rising above the public opinion, or the private opinions, of the age in which we live, and of those who guide its thoughts, this also is a discovery which should lead to serious reflection and a serious course of action. But neither of these dangers arises from any calamity in our position. These dangers suggest, as all our circumstances suggest, that we especially need the lessons of our

past history, and that as we need them, we may better than others profit by them. The life of a recluse student may be favourable to the mere work of poring over books, or of deciphering manuscripts. It is not the most favourable to the work of learning the toils and struggles of human beings, the Divine drama which is ever unfolding itself before our eyes. We must be alive that we may know that which has lived and does live. But we cannot live merely in the passing instant. That which holds us tied and bound to that instant is death. Our English history, like the history of our own selves, is a message to us concerning that which is, and was, and will be evermore.

VIII.

SPENSER'S "FAERY QUEENE."[1]

I AM to speak to you to-night of a very long poem, the longest perhaps in the English language. Few persons probably have read it from beginning to end. There are some who are frightened from reading it at all. I believe it is not only the length which frightens them. They do not know exactly what to make of the title, and they have heard strange rumours about certain hidden meanings in it which they must guess at, and which, after taking great pains, they may perhaps never discover. It may be worth while, they say, for people who have leisure and great sagacity to spend their time in spelling out the conceits of an old author. There may be a certain pleasure in hitting the mark, and some, perhaps, even in sending the arrows which fall most wide of it. But people who are busy, and can only take up a poem now and then for an evening's entertainment, can hardly be expected to give themselves this

[1] Delivered at the Working Men's College, about 1864.

trouble. They would rather find an author who will tell them out plainly what he wishes them to understand.

I am sorry that an opinion of this kind should prevail. For I am sure Spenser's "Faery Queene" is good reading for all kinds of people, especially for all people born on this English soil. Whatever its title may seem to say, it is not a poem about some imaginary unknown world, but about the world in which you and I are dwelling. It was written by an Englishman who lived in the most English reign in our history and whose heart was as full as any man's ever was of English feelings and sympathies. And it is a book about those things in which all Englishmen, and all men, are interested equally. Edmund Spenser had some friends among courtiers and among learned men. But he did not, on the whole, succeed well at Court, and it is not among learned people that he has been the greatest favourite. In fact, till courtiers and scholars find out that the greatest treasure, the highest glory, they have is that which they have in common with every clown, they never will understand rightly any great poet; they will never learn what he has done to teach them.

Edmund Spenser belongs to us who live now in London. He was born in East Smithfield in 1553; he died in King Street, Westminster, in 1598. He may have been connected with high families; but he seems to have been poor; for when he was sixteen he went to Pembroke Hall, at Cambridge, as a sizar—that is, as

a poor student. He was not happy, apparently, at Cambridge; though he owed to it at least one good friend, and he must have brought away from it some good knowledge. When he left it he went as a private tutor into the North; then he came to London, and became acquainted with one of the noblest men of the time, Sir Philip Sidney. There are some stories told to explain how they found each other out. I do not think they are worth record; we may be sure that men who are meant to help each other, and love each other, will find each other out in some way. Sidney's life would have been altogether different without Spenser, and Spenser's without Sidney; so we need not fancy that the poet had to wait at the great man's door while he was looking over part of the "Faery Queene" before he learnt that he was worth more than all the gold that Sidney or anyone else had to give him. Sir Walter Raleigh, who had not perhaps as thoroughly pure a spirit as Sidney, but who had wider thoughts, a more daring love of enterprise, and I should think a more real understanding of poetry than he had, was also one of Spenser's dearest friends. Sidney and Raleigh believed, like wise men as they were, that one who could sing beautiful songs was not at all less fitted for civil employment on that account—would probably have more sympathy and fellowship with human beings, than those who had been brought up amidst red tape; and, if he had a call for it, he would have just as much aptitude for business as any mere

drudge. Perhaps through the influence of the Earl of Leicester, Sidney's uncle, Spenser was sent to Ireland as Secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton. He proved that his friends were sound in their judgment of him by writing the best "View of the State of Ireland" and the condition of the people which, so far as I know, any Irish Secretary ever wrote. He married in Ireland, and worked away in his retirement at many of his minor poems and at his great book, "The Faery Queene." Long as that poem is, it is incomplete, and the story goes that six books out of it were lost by Spenser's servant as he was crossing from Ireland. That, perhaps, was not the case; and if it was, we may not have so much cause for regret. Spenser's fame may not have suffered so much as we might at first fancy. He may have spoken all he was meant to speak in the earlier books. The lost may have been but the leavings of his mind; they might not have helped us to understand him or ourselves better. I do not know, but I think we sometimes mourn rather overmuch about the works that great men intended to write and did not write, as well as about those that they did and that have perished. Even when they are histories, the gaps in our information, which we think so deplorable, may be partly filled up by an earnest study of the hints and memorials which remain to us. If more was told us about what has happened, we might be less diligent in comparing one scrap with another, and so discovering what really did happen. And when it is not history,

but the thoughts and creations of men's minds we have been deprived of, we may reflect that every man can but give us fragments of his mind, and cannot by any means save us from the trouble of putting the fragments together. Most likely he has told us as much as he could tell us in what remains. We should make the best of what we have, and not waste our time in complaining of what we have not. There is a sadder story about Spenser himself than this about his poem, and part of it, I am afraid, we must believe. It was a wild time in Ireland when he was there. He has described to us better than almost anyone what sort of people the old Celtic inhabitants were whom the English colonists came to subdue. He has described all their faults and brutality; but he has spoken of them with a living, poetical interest. And when he ceased to hold any Government appointment, he lived on his estate at Kilcolman, in the county of Cork, and cultivated it; faithfully, I have no doubt, and with as much kindness to the native population as they would let him show. But an insurrection broke out under Tyrone. Spenser's house was burnt; all his property was destroyed. It is even said that his infant child was in the house and could not be saved out of it. He and his wife had to fly to England, it would seem, penniless. Ben Jonson says that Spenser died in Westminster for lack of bread, and that when the Earl of Essex sent him twenty pieces, he returned them, saying, he was sorry he had no time to spend them. One need not

conclude that his friends who cared for him had forgotten him, or that the Queen, if she had known his case, would not have provided for him. He was probably downcast and broken-hearted, eager to shrink from those who would have been most willing to prove their affection to him; desirous only to lay down his head and be at rest.

This story of the departure of such a man is melancholy enough; but there is nothing disgraceful in it, or in any part of the poet's biography. He had to pass through the suffering which enabled him to understand his fellow-men, and which proved that God was taking care of him. He also had many felicities which he was thankful for, and which we have reason to be thankful for, as they give a tone and character to all his poetry. The greatest of these felicities, I conceive, was that he was born in that English age of which I have spoken already. When I say that, you must not expect to find in Spenser frequent panegyrics upon his own age, as if it were the best that ever had been, or ever was to be. On the contrary, you will often hear him talking about the degeneracy of the period into which he was born, and of what men did and thought in the good old days that had passed away. It often makes one wonder to read such sentences, and then to find oneself exalting this very degenerate time as if it were immeasurably above our own. Did not Spenser know much more about it than we do? Or is it the case, that every age is worse than that which went before it

and so that Queen Elizabeth's was worse than Henry the Fourth's or Henry the Fifth's, and that ours is much worse than Queen Elizabeth's? I believe that Spenser did know much more about his time than we do; and therefore that he saw a multitude of faults in it that are nearly hidden from us. I believe he would not have been nearly as good or as wise a man as he was, if he had not felt those faults and lamented over them more than he could over any that were at a distance from him. The faults and sins of his time were his own faults and sins. They were those which he had to struggle with, which were tormenting him. How could any others distress him as these did? How could he feel any others to be as great as they were? When he talked of the good old times, he talked of what had survived to him of those old times. And that was the good, the permanent part of them—the wheat which God had gathered into His garner. There was plenty of chaff mixed with that wheat; but that the wind had carried away. It was not blown into his eyes, as the chaff of his own time was. It is the same, I believe, always. If we are not feeling the evils of our own time much more keenly, much more painfully, than we do the errors of any other time, we cannot do the work we are meant to do, or fight the battle we have to fight. If we are always complimenting our age, that is only an ingenious roundabout way of complimenting ourselves. On the other hand, when we praise the past time, which those who were living in it found plenty of occasion to

blame, we praise that which has passed through the fires, that which was not the vileness and corruption which they hated, and which they were doing what in them lay to destroy. And therefore one may say of any period which one looks back upon, wherein great men lived and great deeds were done—."This was a great period"—although one knows all the while that those great men were struggling with a host of littlenesses in themselves and in all around them—although one knows that every great deed had some base and paltry deed close to it, and that there was an alloy of baseness and paltriness even in that which was noblest.

It is in this sense that I call Queen Elizabeth's period a great period. It is in this sense that I speak of it as one of Spenser's felicities that he was born in that period. Do not suppose me to mean that it would have been good for you or me to have been born in it. We ought to wish for no lot but that which has been given us. We are made for Queen Victoria's time; we are fit for no other. Our instruments, our hands, our hearts, are given us to work with in *this* time, to struggle with the evil, to bring out the good in *this* time, in order that people may look back in after-days and say, "See what has come down to us from it; see what good has survived all the wrong which those who dwelt in it tell us of; see what there was in it which we are to imitate." The blessing to Spenser was this, that the age into which he was born was just the one which was fittest to awaken all the powers that

were latent in him, just the one which enabled him to understand what a man upon this earth has to strive for, as well as what he has to strive against. Much had departed in that reign which Englishmen had once thought very precious, or if not precious, at least necessary. A multitude of old legends, which had been the delight of the people, had been swept away by the Reformation. The Bible had been brought into the common tongue of the people, and had driven out a world of fancies about invisible things to which they had once paid reverence. Many men who saw these things said, "This is very melancholy; the people think no more of fairies and enchantments which they had believed in ever since the pagan time, and they think no more of those stories of Saints which they had heard of from the Friars, and which had got mixed in their minds with their old nursery tales and rhymes. What is to become of them? How can they go on?" And then, when they turned to the upper classes, they saw cause for doubts which appeared to have still greater justification. "The nobles and knights of England," they would say, "used to join in great battles of Christendom against the Infidels. They used to go on expeditions to help the weak; they were full of devotion to women. Now that has passed away. They have become proud and selfish; seekers of wealth and dignities for themselves. They have no thought of anything that belongs to all nations in common, anything that is earnest and devout, anything humble and

chivalrous." There were great pretexts for such words as these; pretexts to those who read the nobler achievements of the past times and forgot all the cruelty, meanness, malice of their times; pretexts to those who read and who saw what the nobles and great men of their own time were doing, how little they seemed to care for the well-being of the land of which they were protectors, how they turned the Reformation and the Gospel into a means of bringing booty and plunder to themselves. Accordingly there were some who said, "If we could but bring back the old superstitions and the old notions about chivalry—if we could but make our age like the age of our forefathers, what a triumph that would be!" Such an experiment had been made in the reign preceding that to which Spenser belonged. It had ended in England's very nearly becoming a province of Spain. And what had Spain, which was the country that was to teach us chivalry and religion, been doing herself? She had been engaged in very mighty works, in very glorious enterprises. Her ships had discovered a New World; her knights had gone forth to conquer it. They had shown a prowess certainly greater than any that their fathers had shown. They had professed a religion as strict; but their enterprise, their chivalry, their religion, had all been turned to the acquisition of gold. The means were worthy of the end. For the religion, the chivalry, the enterprise, had been all brought to promote and to justify piracy, murder, every intolerable

crime and cruelty. If Philip II. had continued the sovereign of England, this is the school in which Englishmen must have been trained. But it was appointed that he should not continue the sovereign of England. His queen died, and another queen reigned in her stead. Now was the time in which it was to be decided whether England could have knights and gentlemen of her own, formed upon a different pattern from those Spanish knights and gentlemen; whether she must lose all the faith that belongs to men because she had parted with the stories that belong to children; whether she could not have enterprise and chivalry without trying to bring back wars that belonged to another generation, which had not been very righteous, and which had not led to any great result in that generation; whether England might not be a colonizing country, and see the sights and breathe the air of the New World, without becoming the tormentor of its inhabitants and the slave of its gold. This was the question which our forefathers in that day had to answer. And I believe they did answer it; not perfectly, not without committing a great many sins, some of them the very same sins which their enemy had been guilty of, each of which was sure to bring down future punishments upon the land, but yet in a way that shows that they were obeying higher guidance than their own, that an unseen Wisdom was directing their counsels. What is most remarkable in that time, I think, is that sailors in their ships, states-

men in their cabinets, knights in the court, divines in their pulpits, poets in their studies, without understanding one another in the least, often contradicting and despising each other, were nevertheless all working together to find out this answer—were all contributing their quota to make it effectual for their country and for mankind.

I am to tell you how I think one of the poets of that time applied himself to this task, and what kind of success he had. The words "Faery Queene" remind us that the poet was living under a queen. This is no fancy of mine; Spenser tells us so again and again; and we must take him at his word, not giving him credit for flattery, or any low motive, for saying so, or we shall not understand the very purpose of his work, and the good that was accomplished by it. He felt—all the distinguished men of his time felt—that it was a blessing, a perfectly unspeakable blessing for England at that time, that it was governed by a woman. Perhaps there never was a time in our history when the country *seemed* so much to want the head and hand of a man, when vigour was so essential, when weakness would have been so fatal. And yet there never was a time when England was in so much danger of losing all grace, refinement, deference to the weak; when worship of mere might, physical and intellectual, was so likely to have displaced every other worship. The two first Tudor princes had been men of mighty energy. Unlike in most respects, Henry VII. and his

son had equally impressed their subjects with such a feeling of force and sovereignty as no previous generation had been conscious of. Then followed a boy, who died at sixteen, and a woman, who was the tool of a Spanish husband. Such reigns must have naturally awakened a longing for strong rule. If that rule had been a male one, it would probably have been, either a frightful domestic tyranny, or one which absorbed all other thoughts in the thought of foreign conquest. The loyalty of England was drawn forth in a new form and character when Elizabeth proved that she possessed all the intellectual and moral force that was demanded of a sovereign, without ceasing to have the feelings, and tendernesses, and weaknesses of her sex. That this loyalty and attachment were spurious and affected, no man in his senses, who reads the acts and studies the literature of the period, can believe. They were most genuine. There was, however, the fear of their terminating in the Queen. Then they might have become mere courtly conceits, and by degrees have lost all their sincerity. To the poets of England, especially to Spenser, we owe it that the feeling towards Elizabeth was not allowed to be exhausted in compliments to her, or to any mortal princess. Whatever excellence was in her, was marred by a thousand frailties and weaknesses. It might be contemplated through her, and yet apart from her. There was an ideal excellence which she might help her people to contemplate, and which might remain

for their contemplation after she had left them. The "Faery Queene" is such a queen as this.

I spoke of superstitions which the English people had cherished about Elves and Fairies. It was a mythology which had come down to them from their Scandinavian ancestors; it never had deserted them. Thoughts of kindly or malicious beings, dwelling about them, in some invisible region not far from themselves, gave them a certain pleasure and a certain terror; mixed with their Christmas, and Candlemas, and Michaelmas feasts; were preserved in old songs and tales, which had been handed from father to son, and of which no one could say when they had begun. Then these had become combined with tales of knightly adventures, of the Champions of Christendom, who had wonderful and mysterious aids in their battles with giants and magicians; especially they had been associated with the great Prince Arthur, who was half regarded as a great Christian hero, though the stories about him had a strange savour of paganism, and half as a great English hero, though all the battles reported of him were battles against those Anglo-Saxons who celebrated his achievements. All these different stories were only half believed at any time. Still they connected themselves with what ought not to be a half belief, with what should be the strongest of all convictions, the belief that there is an invisible world surrounding us—the conviction that there is a real and intimate relation between that world and ourselves. Might it

not be possible to preserve that conviction, to connect it with all the most practical and earnest thoughts of the English gentleman and the English peasant in the days of Elizabeth, and so to save what was really precious and venerable in the old superstitions, now that they were doomed, and must evidently fall off and die?

One would have thought this a very noble aim. But the more one tried to conceive how it could be accomplished, the more, I think, one would feel at a loss. How the "Faery Queene" and the English Queen should be brought to understand each other, how Arthur and the Knights and the Fairies should ever speak to us again and establish a relation with our battles with our daily foes, this I, at least, could never have conjectured. Nor would the case have been made clearer to me by an account which Spenser gives of his own purpose in a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh. He tells him that under twelve knights, who all served the great Gloriana, Queen of Fairyland, he intended to typify the twelve moral virtues. Now, I must frankly own I have a dread of these twelve moral virtues. I do not mean that I dislike them in the abstract; but I mean to say that they are likely to become mere abstract personages, and that then I do not feel that I can the least care for them, but feel a certain horror of them, as of beings who pretend to be something very great and turn out to be merely nothings. I must confess that, if I had read Spenser's letter without reading his poem, I should have expected him to reduce flesh and blood,

men and women, into mere qualities—such as mere Temperance, Holiness, Justice, which look fine in a book, because they have capital letters prefixed to them; but vanish into thin air as soon as one approaches them.

Having read his poem, I have come to exactly the opposite conclusion; I have found, that just what I and other persons are apt to turn into mere abstractions, what we can talk about as if they meant nothing, become, with him, great living and tremendous realities. Holiness is not a word with a big letter; it is brought before me in the person of a living man, who is going out to fight an old Dragon, and to break down a castle in which he holds his captives in prison. I find this Knight of Holiness betrothed to a fair damsel, Una, who goes forth with him, to guide him on his way to the enemies whom he has to encounter. This lady I am told is Truth, and I believe it; but then she is described to me in these words:—

"A lovely Ladie rode him faire beside,
Upon a lowly Asse more white then snow,
Yet she much whiter; but the same did hide
Under a vele, that wimpled was full low;
And over all a blacke stole shee did throw:
As one that inly mournd, so was she sad,
And heavie sate upon her palfrey slow;
Seemed in heart some hidden care she had,
And by her, in a line, a milkewhite lambe she lad.

So pure and innocent, as that same lambe,
She was in life and every vertuous lore;

And by descent from Royall lynage came
Of ancient Kinges and Queenes, that had of yore
Their scepters stretcht from East to Westerne shore,
And all the world in their subjection held;
Till that infernall feend with foule uprore
Forwasted all their land, and them expeld;
Whom to avenge she had this Knight from far compeld."

This description, I believe, takes away all notion from our mind that Truth is something cold, and hard, and dead; I am apt enough to have that conception of her, to think that when we talk of pursuing Truth we mean pursuing something that is formal, and artificial, and verbal; something that it is impossible to love, and therefore impossible to give up everything for. Whereas the poet is determined that I should confess it to be living, and beautiful, and worthy of the highest fidelity and obedience that we can render it.

But the Red Cross Knight, who is wedded to this Una, this Truth, very soon has to come in contact with Error. And what is Error? Now, at least, we shall have some cunning, logical definition. The poet will not try to make us think of this as living anywhere but in books and propositions. You shall hear:—

"But, full of fire and greedy hardiment,
The youthfull Knight could not for ought be staide;
But forth unto the darksom hole he went,
And looked in: his glistring armor made
A little glooming light, much like a shade;
By which he saw the ugly monster plaine,
Halfe like a serpent horribly displaide,
But th' other halfe did womans shape retaine,
Most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine.

And, as she lay upon the durtie ground,
Her huge long taile her den all overspred,
Yet was in knots and many boughtes upwound,
Pointed with mortall sting. Of her there bred
A thousand yong ones, which she dayly fed,
Sucking upon her poisnous dugs; each one
Of sundrie shapes, yet all ill-favored:
Soone as that uncouth light upon them shone,
Into her mouth they crept, and suddain all were gone.

Their dam upstart out of her den effraide,
And rushed forth, hurling her hideous taile
About her cursed head; whose folds displaid
Were stretcht now forth at length without entraile.
She lookt about, and seeing one in mayle,
Armed to point, sought backe to turne againe;
For light she hated as the deadly bale,
Ay wont in desert darknes to remaine,
Where plain none might her see, nor she see any plaine."

The Red Cross Knight, or the Knight of Holiness, we may suppose, is to be a specially model man, one who is to be held up as an example of unfailing, undeviating rectitude in all circumstances. Spenser has no such conception of him. He has a right purpose, a high and glorious aim; but because he has that, he is liable to all temptations, to exactly those you would suppose him most free from. He who is bound to Truth by the firmest bonds must, of course, be a hater of Hypocrisy. You know, we all hate hypocrisy in other people. Spenser is rude enough to tell the holiest man among us that he is liable to be assaulted by Hypocrisy, to be deceived and conquered by him. For Hypocrisy, like Error, is with our poet no shadow.

You have him brought before you here as a very distinct person :—

> " At length they chaunst to meet upon the way
> An aged Sire, in long blacke weedes yclad,
> His feete all bare, his beard all hoarie gray,
> And by his belt his booke he hanging had :
> Sober he seemde, and very sagely sad,
> And to the ground his eyes were lowly bent,
> Simple in shew, and voide of malice bad ;
> And all the way he prayed as he went,
> And often knockt his brest, as one that did repent."

Then we are told, in the next canto, how

> " This guilefull great Enchaunter parts
> The Redcrosse Knight from Truth :
> Into whose stead faire Falshood steps,
> And works him woefull ruth."

There is no attempt to disguise the degradation. Duessa, who is called Fidessa, takes the place of Una in his heart. To her he surrenders himself almost entirely.

Do you ask what this means ? You will get many answers. One will tell you how it describes a man deluded by Falsehood and Superstition; another that it describes the slavery of the Christian Church to the same enemies. I believe that it could not mean one of these things without meaning both, and therefore there is no occasion to decide between opposing commentators. And this is what I would say to you about the complaint which I told you many people make of Spenser, that it requires great ingenuity to

get at his meaning, and that when you think you have got it, you cannot be sure that he did not intend something quite different. I would beseech all his readers not to waste any ingenuity in deciphering his hieroglyphics. The simplest man who is engaged in the battle of life will know most of what he means. None who are not engaged in it will know anything of what he means, let them be as clever as they may. It is true of his poem, as it is of every good poem, that more is meant in it than meets the ear, more than the poet knew himself, more than any of us can know; and therefore we need not quarrel with one another about the signification of it. The experience of every man is different in some respects from the experience of every other, and yet in essentials they are alike; and therefore each man may see something, in a great poem concerning human experience, which another does not see, and each man's discovery may throw light upon that of every other, instead of contradicting it.

But to continue: Una, that is, Truth, does not lose her power or forego her mission because her Knight has deserted her:—

> "One day, nigh wearie of the yrkesome way,
> From her unhastie beast she did alight;
> And on the grasse her dainty limbs did lay
> In secrete shadow, far from all mens sight:
> From her fayre head her fillet she undight,
> And layd her stole aside. Her angels face,
> As the great eye of heaven, shyned bright,
> And made a sunshine in the shady place;
> Did never mortall eye behold such heavenly grace.

It fortuned, out of the thickest wood
A ramping Lyon rushed suddeinly,
Hunting full greedy after salvage blood.
Soone as the royall virgin he did spy,
With gaping mouth at her ran greedily,
To have attonce devourd her tender corse;
But to the pray when as he drew more ny,
His bloody rage aswaged with remorse,
And, with the sight amazd, forgat his furious forse.

In stead thereof he kist her wearie feet,
And lickt her lilly hands with fawning tong,
As he her wronged innocence did weet.
O, how can beautie maister the most strong,
And simple truth subdue avenging wrong!
Whose yielded pryde and proud submission,
Still dreading death, when she had marked long,
Her hart gan melt in great compassion;
And drizling teares did shed for pure affection."

I need not draw the moral of this story (Spenser has drawn it), that Truth is the mightiest thing in the world, that all brute force is created to bow to it, and will bow to it at last. This is the great and everlasting lesson, of which there may be ten thousand different and ever-renewing applications, but which will remain, though heaven and earth pass away. Spenser himself gives us one of these applications in the sixth canto of this lay of the Red Cross Knight, where he brings Una before us sitting and giving laws to a savage tribe, who kneel before her and do her homage. It was a fine, and glorious, and practical lesson which the poet was reading to his countrymen in that colonizing age, when they were going forth to subdue new races that

had probably been once civilized and had sunk into barbarism—when the Spaniard, who had gone among those races, had found no means of subduing them but the claws of the lion and the arts of Archimago—to tell them that simple Truth in her weakness was stronger than these, and could work results which they could never work. It was a lesson to England in that day, and in all days to come, which it would be well that she should lay to heart.

I have shown you, I think, that no qualities long remain mere names or fictions in Spenser's hands. If you will read at your leisure the fourth canto of this lay, which describes Duessa's House of Pride, I think you will find that each of her six sage counsellors, Idleness, Gluttony, Envy, and the rest, has a most terrible distinctness, a reality which we do not forget when we meet him, as we are sure to meet him, in ourselves and in others. Take the first:—

"But this was drawne of six unequall beasts,
On which her six sage Counsellours did ryde,
Taught to obay their bestiall beheasts,
With like conditions to their kindes applyde:
Of which the first, that all the rest did guyde,
Was sluggish Idlenesse, the nourse of sin;
Upon a slouthfull Asse he chose to ryde,
Arayd in habit blacke, and amis thin,
Like to an holy Monck, the service to begin.

And in his hand his Portesse still he bare,
That much was worne, but therein little redd;
For of devotion he had little care,
Still drownd in sleepe, and most of his daies dedd:

Scarse could he once uphold his heavie hedd,
To looken whether it were night or day.
May seeme the wayne was very evill ledd,
When such an one had guiding of the way,
That knew not whether right he went, or else astray.

From worldly cares himselfe he did esloyne,
And greatly shunned manly exercise;
From everie worke he chalenged essoyne,
For contemplation sake: yet otherwise
His life he led in lawlesse riotise,
By which he grew to grievous malady;
For in his lustlesse limbs, through evill guise,
A shaking fever raignd continually.
Such one was Idlenesse, first of this company."

All my extracts have been taken from the first of Spenser's books, partly because I believe it is the most popular, partly because the poet's purpose becomes most intelligible when we follow the progress of any one of his stories. There is, however, a connection between all these stories; there is a person who appears in each of them, and who is the centre round which all the poet's conceptions appear to move. This is Prince Arthur. His first appearance to Una, when sorrowing for her lost knight, is described thus:—

"At last she chaunced by good hap to meet
A goodly knight, faire marching by the way,
Together with his Squyre, arayed meet:
His glitterand armour shined far away,
Like glauncing light of Phœbus brightest ray;
From top to toe no place appeared bare,
That deadly dint of steele endanger may.
Athwart his brest a bauldrick brave he ware,
That shind, like twinkling stars, with stones most pretious rare:

And in the midst thereof one pretious stone
Of wondrous worth, and eke of wondrous mights,
Shapt like a Ladies head, exceeding shone,
Like Hesperus emongst the lesser lights,
And strove for to amaze the weaker sights:
Thereby his mortall blade full comely hong
In yvory sheath, ycarv'd with curious slights,
Whose hilts were burnisht gold, and handle strong
Of mother perle; and buckled with a golden tong.

His haughtie Helmet, horrid all with gold,
Both glorious brightnesse and great terrour bredd:
For all the crest a Dragon did enfold
With greedie pawes, and over all did spredd
His golden winges: his dreadfull hideous hedd,
Close couched on the bever, seemd to throw
From flaming mouth bright sparckles fiery redd,
That suddeine horrour to faint hartes did show;
And scaly tayle was stretcht adowne his back full low.

Upon the top of all his loftie crest,
A bounch of heares discolourd diversly,
With sprincled pearle and gold full richly drest,
Did shake, and seemd to daunce for jollity,
Like to an almond tree ymounted hye
On top of greene Selinis all alone,
With blossoms brave bedecked daintily;
Whose tender locks do tremble every one
At everie little breath that under heaven is blowne.

His warlike shield all closely cover'd was,
Ne might of mortall eye be ever seene;
Not made of steele, nor of enduring bras,
Such earthly mettals soon consumed beene,
But all of Diamond perfect pure and cleene
It framed was, one massy entire mould,
Hewen out of Adamant rocke with engines keene,
That point of speare it never percen could,
Ne dint of direfull sword divide the substance would

The same to wight he never wont disclose,
But whenas monsters huge he would dismay,
Or daunt unequall armies of his foes,
Or when the flying heavens he would affray;
For so exceeding shone his glistring ray,
That Phœbus golden face it did attaint,
As when a cloud his beames doth over-lay;
And silver Cynthia wexed pale and faynt,
As when her face is staynd with magicke arts constraint.

No magicke art hereof had any might,
Nor bloody wordes of bold Enchaunters call;
But all that was not such as seemd in sight
Before that shield did fade, and suddeine fall;
And when him list the raskall routes appall,
Men into stones therewith he could transmew,
And stones to dust, and dust to nought at all;
And, when him list the prouder lookes subdew,
He would them gazing blind, or turne to other hew.

Ne let it seem that credence this exceedes;
For he that made the same was knowne right well
To have done much more admirable deedes.
It Merlin was, which whylome did excell
All living wightes in might of magicke spell:
Both shield and sword, and armour all he wrought
For this young Prince, when first to armes he fell;
But, when he dyde, the Faery Queene it brought
To Faerie lond, where yet it may be seene, if sought."

I have given you this long extract because Prince Arthur is at once one of the most important personages in the "Faery Queene," and the one whose place in it the reader finds it hardest to understand. I shall not try to explain what his office is, because I believe the poet will give a much clearer explanation of the whole subject than I can. I will merely give you a

hint or two, which perhaps may somewhat assist your own thoughts.

Prince Arthur is, as I have said, in the stories of the Middle Ages, at once the leading Champion of Christendom and the British Prince—the champion of our soil. All the tales of him, surrounded by the twelve Knights of his Round Table, make us think of the land of our fathers as a sacred land, over which heavenly eyes are watching, for which heavenly powers are fighting. All the stories at the same time of his education by Merlin, of his enchanted sword, of his death, of his appearance again some other day, carry us beyond anything that is merely local; he seems to belong altogether to another and more sublime region, without losing for a moment his relationship to this.

I apprehend that it was the desire of the author of the "Faery Queene" to make this bright vision, with the various seemingly contradictory elements of which it is composed, a substantial one for his contemporaries, and for all Britons who should come after them. I think he wanted us to feel not less, but more attachment, to the land of our nativity, and to the homes and tombs of our fathers, than we have been wont to feel. I think that he had no fear of confounding the Queen Gloriana with the Queen Elizabeth, that he chose to leave something of that confusion, because he thought there could be nothing true, nothing heavenly, in the aspirations or the purposes of his fellow-men, if they lost their interest in their own country under

pretence of any wider sympathies with the world, or any solitary devotion to God. If they did not understand that their battle was here, and that their victory was to be here—if they did not feel that they were struggling for their country when they were struggling for themselves, he believed they would become very worthless and contemptible creatures. But, on the other hand, he wished every man to know that a whole host of invisible enemies are about him at every instant—that Idleness, Gluttony, Envy, Hypocrisy, and Falsehood, the ruler of them all, are the most actual and tremendous foes with which every man is contending, but one of which assails this man more, another that; he wished us to feel that the battle is an individual one and yet a common one, that every knight who is doing his work must needs be aiding every other knight; that no one can be doing his work unless he is setting before him some high ideal, some noble standard, after which, amidst all discomfitures, he is to strive; and that there must be some ideal in which all these are united together, some perfect Knight and Deliverer, belonging to earth and heaven, in Whom they are expressed.

I have spoken to you very little of the exquisite pictures in this poem, and of the music of its verse, because it seems to me these come home to our hearts much more as we read the poem, or hear it read, than through any criticism. I wished rather to remove an impression, which I think hinders our pleasure and profit

in reading any poem, that the writer has devised some artificial machinery for the sake of giving effect and interest to his thoughts. I am sure nothing delights us at last but what we feel to have truth at the foundation of it, no poetical inventions but what we feel are used as the most transparent medium that can be found for enabling us to discern truths which would otherwise be hidden from us. Spenser, it seems to me, invented nothing; he took that which he found lying idle, and useless, and unintelligible. He showed us what sense, and beauty, and harmony there lay beneath it, what help we may get from Fairyland, if we understand that Fairyland is about the noble, and the shopkeeper, and the peasant; that even in the midst of the city where he was born a poor man, and died perhaps for lack of bread, there is a way by which our spirits may ascend into it, may see its bright skies, and taste its fresh fountains; that everyone who seeks his help and armour there, may become as gentle a knight as he was who wore the Red Cross shield, may be able to vanquish as many giants and enchanters as any who went forth from the palace of Gloriana.

IX.

MILTON.[1]

You will find among Mr. Wordsworth's Sonnets this very memorable one; it was written in London in 1802:—

> "Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
> England hath need of thee: she is a fen
> Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
> Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
> Have forfeited their ancient English dower
> Of inward happiness. We are selfish men:
> Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
> And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
> Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart:
> Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
> Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free.
> So didst thou travel on life's common way
> In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
> The lowliest duties on herself did lay."

I open my lecture with these words, partly because no one had so good a right to speak of a poet as a poet, still more because the poet speaks so much more of what Milton was than of what he wrote. It is the

[1] Delivered at the Birmingham and Midland Institute.

man who he thinks could reprove England for its selfishness; it is the man whom he somewhat extravagantly asks, what Milton certainly would not have asked of any mortal, to restore to his country freedom, virtue, power. It is the man whose soul he represents as dwelling like a star above the earth, and yet taking upon itself the most earthly duties. Neither when he wrote this Sonnet, nor during all the years in which he published it afresh for his countrymen, would Mr. Wordsworth have made himself responsible for Milton's opinions, political or ecclesiastical. Some of his poems show how strongly in his latter years he dissented from them; but the character of the man remained for Wordsworth a steadfast and permanent object amidst all the fluctuations of opinion through which he, or his observer, or, the ages might have passed. A student of language and of verse had a temptation to think of the voice whose sound was like the sea more than of the purity, majesty, and freedom of the person who uttered the voice; but Wordsworth felt, that if the one does not correspond to the other, it is a hollow and false voice, which we should not admire, and cannot listen to for any long time.

I shall not inquire what there was in the London of sixty years ago which suggested to Mr. Wordsworth such painful reflections about the selfishness and degradation of his country. These thoughts may come to good and earnest men at all times; there is always enough to justify them; there is always much to qualify them,

and to prove that the ancient English dower has not been forfeited; but there was in London, in whatever street of it he might be walking, much which would recall to anyone acquainted with Milton's life the incidents of it, and those special proofs of its grandeur as well as its lowliness which presented themselves to his brother-poet in painful contrast with the world around him. Suppose he was jostled by the crowd in Cheapside; in one of the streets which run out of it there had dwelt two hundred years before a scrivener named Milton, whose shop was denoted by a sign-post, who lost money and credit with his family by becoming a Protestant; who was married to a woman not known beyond that neighbourhood, but famous for her deeds within it; who on the 9th December, 1608, had a son given to him. He will have remembered how this boy grew up with an unusual beauty of countenance, so that at nine years old all painters delighted to copy it. Passing into St. Paul's Church, Mr. Wordsworth will have looked reverently at the School founded by Dean Colet, where this boy spent more hours of the night than his eyes could bear in poring over the books which were dear to him then and in all his after-days. He may have pursued his walk down Fleet Street till he came to St. Bride's Churchyard. There he may have tried to identify the shop of Russell, a tailor, where the St. Paul's boy in the ripeness of his age, after he had visited Italy and received the homage of its great men, became himself a hard-working schoolmaster. The

poet may have traced him to Scotland Yard, near Whitehall, where, in advancing or fixed blindness, he wrote letters to the different Courts of Europe, as Cromwell's Latin Secretary; then to a house opening into St. James's Park, which was assigned him as an official residence. Wordsworth will have known that no such pleasant neighbourhood was appointed for Milton's last days. Perhaps, however, he began his pilgrimage with a visit to the house near Bunhill Fields, where "Paradise Lost" must have been chiefly written, and to Cripplegate Church, where its author is buried. He may have ended it in the Abbey, where a tardy homage had been paid to the Poet of the seventeenth century, and might be hereafter to the Poet of the nineteenth.

You may complain that I should trouble you in Birmingham with my London topography; but if one can associate its thoroughfares and by-places with recollections that concern the glory of the whole land, it becomes yours as much as ours; everyone who visits it may feel that he has as much to do with it as those who dwell in it. I do not question that the streets of your great town are also full of sacred memories, that they bring back to you the great men of other days, as they suggest to us the wonderful achievements of this day. There may always be an interchange and commerce in these treasures between different parts of the same country, as well as between countries which seas divide from each other. And certainly, as far as pro-

perty in poets is concerned, those who dwell in Warwickshire, and have Stratford-on-Avon near them, need not be jealous of any pretensions which we can put forward.

It is not, however, for the sake of one town or another that I have led you to these different homes of Milton; it is because I believe you cannot understand him, or his works, in any way so well as by connecting them with the stages of his life. The eminent writer of the Sonnet which I have quoted invented a very artificial division for his own works; he called them poems of the Imagination, poems of the Fancy, poems of Sentiment, poems of Reflection. I have no doubt that he knew what he meant, and that something is to be learnt about the nature of Fancy, Imagination, and Reflection from his classification; but I am sure his readers are often puzzled to know why one of their favourite poems might not as well have been described by one title as the other. And they would all, I think, much prefer to know in what place, at what time, under what impulses, amidst what society, the thoughts were breathed and the words came forth, than to have them ticketed and labelled for their use even by the writer himself.

The verse and the prose of Milton, far more than those of most great men, are expressive of what he was doing, enjoying, or suffering at the time they were poured out. I do not mean that they were sudden extemporaneous utterances of some passing impulse.

They are full of thought and deliberation; still they were born amidst great throes in the heart of the writer as well as of his nation. We lose the sense and flavour if we read them without reference to their chronology. Considered as compositions, or subjects of criticism, I can say nothing about them which has not been said a hundred times before, and a hundred times better; but I may, perhaps, give you a hint or two about the way of making Milton his own expositor and commentator, so that the wisdom or folly of my comments, or of any other man's, may be of little importance to you.

I should not make any allusion to certain poems which Milton wrote in Latin, mostly when he was quite a boy, if it were not that two of them tell us some facts which greatly affected his subsequent life as well as those early years. One which is addressed to his father was written, it would seem, to justify himself from some complaints about his over-devotion to poets and poetry. He reminds his parent that he himself was an artist; that music, the sister of poetry, had been always a cherished pursuit with him; and he thanks him with earnest affection for having taught him from the first that money was not to be the object of his life, for having freely spent his own that his son might have the culture which would fit him to follow higher ends. The music of the elder Milton passed into the heart of the younger; he became the most musical of English writers. In his own words, he was possessed by—

"Thoughts that voluntary moved
Harmonious numbers."

The unworldliness of his father became a still nobler and more precious inheritance; one for which children may give thanks who have none of his genius, and without which his genius would have been dwarfed and debased.

Another of these poems is written to Thomas Young, his earliest tutor, who had become a pastor among the English merchants at Hamburg. The letter is full of classical and mythological fancies, which would strike most of us as strange and out of place; very likely they did not seem so to this worthy divine, though he was a strict Puritan, and though Milton probably owed to him, as much as to any man, the Hebrew training of his mind. Whatever learning he had of another kind, *that* was at the root of it. No dream of visible gods interfered with his awe of the Invisible. His poetry, his prose, his whole life, was the expression of that awe. He had a deeper, a more thoroughly Jewish horror of idolatry than almost any Englishman who ever lived, though that sentiment has been characteristic of our countrymen above any people in the modern world. The immense interest which he felt in the study of Heathen writers, his passionate love for them, strengthened instead of weakening this detestation. He seemed to feel that he could not pay them their proper honour, or enter into the truth which was in them, unless he read them by the Light of the Higher Truth which was a protest against their falsehoods.

And so it was with another class of writings of which he became greatly enamoured, at the very time when he was most busy with these books of the Old world. I use the word "enamoured," for it is the true one to explain his impression about books. They were to him like persons; the print, and paper, and bindings were no dead barriers between him and the men and women who were described in them, or who spoke in them. All were alive; he talked with them and knew them. Well, then, it might have appeared a dangerous thing for a young man to plunge into the romances of the Middle Ages, which recount many acts that are impure and evil, and attribute them to heroes whom they extol.

There is a passage—one of the most elevating and consolatory, I think, in the English tongue—wherein he declares what effect these writings, as well as those which belonged more directly to his school and university course, produced upon him. I wish I could venture to read the whole of it to you; those who do not know it would thank me, those who know it already would, I believe, thank me more; but I must content myself with these few sentences:—

"Next, that I may tell ye whither my younger feet wander'd; I betook me among those lofty Fables and Romances, which recount in solemne cantos the deeds of knighthood founded by our victorious kings; and from hence had in renowne over all Christendome. There I read it in the oath of every knight, that he should defend to the expense of his best blood, or of his life, if it

so befell him, the honour of virgin or matron. From whence even then I learnt what a noble vertue that sure must be, to the defence of which so many worthies by such a deare adventure of themselves had sworne. And if I found in the story afterward any of them by word or deed breaking that oath, I judg'd it the same fault of the Poet as that which is attributed to *Homer*, to have written undecent things of the gods. Only this my minde gave me that every free and gentle spirit without that oath ought to be borne a Knight, nor needed to expect the guilt spurre, or the laying of a sword upon his shoulder, to stirre him up both by his counsell, and his arme, to secure and protect the weaknesse of any woman. So that even those books which to many others have bin the fuell of wantonnesse, and loose living, I cannot thinke how unlesse by divine indulgence, prov'd to me so many incitements as you have heard, to the love and stedfast observation of vertue."

The defence of which this is a specimen was wrung from Milton by some hard words which were spoken of him after he became a controversial writer. I quote them that you may see what this young Puritan was, and how much more chivalrous young men would be if they studied under him.

In the work from which I have quoted, Milton refers to his life at the University, in answer to calumnies which were propagated in his own time, and have been renewed since; he "acknowledges publickly, with all gratefull minde, that more than ordinary favour and

respect which I found above any of my equals at the hands of those curteous and learned men, the Fellowes of that Colledge wherein I spent some yeares; who at my parting, after I had taken two degrees, as the manner is, signified many wayes, how much better it would content them that I would stay; as by many letters full of kindnesse and loving respect, both before that time, and long after, I was assur'd of their singular good affection towards me." Such a testimony ought to serve for their acquittal from any charges of unkind treatment which were at first meant to disparage the supposed sufferer, but which would now be looked upon as the cruelest imputations upon those who inflicted it.

But the really important documents concerning his life in college are the poems which he composed there. The most memorable of these, the "Hymn on the Nativity," is familiar to many of you; it is too long for quotation; extracts from it would be of little profit. I shall only notice it as an illustration of that great characteristic of Milton to which I alluded before, his habit of making all the stories of Heathen Mythology unfold and illustrate the truth; which we are apt to use only for the exposure and confutation of their absurdity. In taking this course he followed the example of his admirable and learned predecessor, Edmund Spenser. And I think these two illustrious poets have done more both to counteract the mischief of paganism and to vindicate the use of the treasures which it has bequeathed to us, than all the Apologists. There is one

of his University exercises, written when he was nineteen, which I like to remember. It was written partly in English and partly in Latin, and the English part of it is a witness that all he learnt of other nations was only to serve for the better study and enriching of his own. It begins:—

> "Hail, native language, that by sinews weak
> Didst move my first endeavouring tongue to speak,
> And mad'st imperfect words with childish tripps,
> Half unpronounc't, slide through my infant lipps,
> Driving dum silence from the portal-dore,
> Where he had mutely sat two years before:
> Here I salute thee and thy pardon ask,
> That now I use thee in my latter task.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I have some naked thoughts that rove about
> And loudly knock to have their passage out;
> And wearie of their place do only stay
> Till thou hast deck't them in thy best array."

And then, with great pomp of words, and a kind of quaint humour, he associates classical stories about Apollo and the Nymphs with the hard forms of Logic. It is only a boyish effort, with much of boyish redundancy in style and thought; but I know few more striking proofs that "the boy is father to the man."

Four years later he wrote a Sonnet which was a surer witness of what he was then, and of what he would be afterward:—

> "How soon hath Time, the suttle theef of youth,
> Stol'n on his wing my three and twentieth yeer!
> My hasting dayes flie on with full career,
> But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.

Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
That I to manhood am arriv'd so near,
And inward ripenes doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits indu'th.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure eev'n,
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great task Master's eye."

Whether Milton's spring was late or early, the summer fruits began to come forth immediately after this twenty-third year. It was in 1632 that he went to Horton, near Colebrook in Buckinghamshire, a house which his father had taken to reside in during his old age. There he passed five years. In those years he wrote "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," "Comus," "The Arcades," and "Lycidas." I will not attempt to describe the place or the neighbourhood; those of you who consult the work of Professor Masson, the latest and most diligent and devoted of Milton's biographers, will find a clear and lively account of it as it was and as it is. It deserved the zeal of any of Milton's admirers to investigate and describe that place, for it was specially inhabited by his genius. We often use that word carelessly; we forget its connection with the adjective "genial;" we forget that "genius" means the vital productive power of a man. Well; those years at Horton are undoubtedly the poet's most genial time, the one in which he produced with the greatest freedom and joy; when all things about him most echoed the

music that was in him. The poem he calls "Il Penseroso," in which he tries to bring before us all images that move to sadness and melancholy, is really just as great a proof of his inward gladness as the one in which he sings the praises of Mirth. He could not be content without finding a response in Nature to every mood of his mind; and he does find it. The song of the Nightingale, which many wise men say is full of rapture and delight, could feed his melancholy because he wished to feed it; because it was, in truth, just as pleasant a sensation to him as the one which is contrasted with it, only suggesting something deeper and more permanent. So in the other poem he calls Shakespeare "Fancy's child," and says that he

> "Warbles his native wood-notes wild."

We are much more apt to speak of Shakespeare as the child of Truth, as one who brings before us the realities of life; no chance warbler of wood-notes, but the composer of very elaborate harmonies. But Milton's words are perfectly true for their own object. That is the light in which one who was in search of all entertainments for the fancy would regard the plays of Shakespeare; they would not be studies to him in his own life, or in the lives of his fellow-men. The songs and freaks of Puck, the dreams of Oberon and Titania, the dialogues of Rosalind and of Touchstone in the forest of Arden, would represent the mind of the poet to such an observer, and this without any reference to the

general purport of the drama. I have wandered more into criticism than I intended; but my wish is to make this passage of Milton's life intelligible to you, and to prepare you for a future one when he would become acquainted with a very different kind of sadness from that which is pictured in "Il Penseroso."

But even now, when he was most alive to the charms of all external objects, he was never deserted by that sense of a responsibility to the unseen Task-master which he had expressed in his Sonnet, and which was the secret of his life and his power. The witchery not of Nature only, but of all bright and lovely human forms and faces, was upon him. No courtier of Charles I. felt the attraction of the masques and entertainments in which the monarch and his wife delighted, more than the young Puritan. In the "Arcades," as in the masque of "Comus," he did full honour to the Countess of Derby and to the ladies of Ludlow Castle. But the object of that masque was to exhibit in richer and more glorious verse than had ever been consecrated to courtly tastes and courtly indulgences, the battle of virtue with its tempters, and the Divine help which is sustaining it against them. The time was approaching when Milton would try, as he said himself, with his left hand to fight against what he held to be the corruptions of England in its high places. I believe he was fighting against them with his right hand when he showed how all the amusements which had been most abused, all appeals to the eye and the ear, all classical

and Middle-age fables, might be consecrated to the service of Righteousness and Truth. I must not allude to the other memorable poem of this time, "Lycidas," further than to say, that its great interest as a key to Milton's biography lies in that which perhaps weakens its effect as a pastoral or elegiac poem. He intimates very clearly that his thoughts are elsewhere than in the days which he had passed at Cambridge, or in the sea where

> "Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high;"

that he was busy with anticipations of a great change which was to come upon England: he held that

> "The two-handed engine at the door
> Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

Before he took any further interest in that two-handed engine, he paid the visit to Italy of which I spoke. The complimentary verses which he received, or which he wrote, in the old or the modern language of Italy whilst he was there, are nothing to us. But that he should have seen all the sights which Italy offered to him, should have felt their fascination in every pore, should have received the incense of the most unexpected and most agreeable flatterers, and should have escaped out of the furnace unhurt, with fresh knowledge and fresh perception of beauty in Art and Nature, but more an Englishman, more a man, more a believer in the Unseen and Eternal tha nbefore—this signifies to us much; this no one who is speaking of him ought to pass over. Nor should we ever forget that it was

exactly when the impressions of Italy were freshest and most strong upon him, that he returned to England, to take part in its political strifes, and to earn his bread by teaching boys. I put the two facts together because together they explain the paradox in Mr. Wordsworth's lines, that his

"Soul was as a star and dwelt apart,"

whilst he was plunging into the fiercest debates of his time. He certainly did not dwell apart from any controversy that was raging; he certainly preserved no tone of philosophical or literary indifference. He was not more tolerant of the opinions which he opposed than his contemporaries; he drew no nice distinctions, such as our consciences bid us draw, between the opinions and the men who supported them. He is fierce and merciless to all whom he deemed, rightly or wrongly, the enemies of his country's freedom and of justice. But his soul did dwell apart in this sense. When he is most vehement, when you dissent most from his judgments of events or of men, you cannot help feeling that it is justice, freedom, his country, he is caring for; that these ends are present in his mind, are dearer to him than all others, whether he sees the way to them or not. He dwells apart from the factions of his age when he is in the midst of its factions. The party he is fighting for is dear to him only for the sake of the purpose to which he supposes that it is pledged. If in his judgment it forsakes that purpose, he will forsake it, let the persons

who compose it be as much his friends as they may, let their wrath against him be as great as it may. And he secured his soul from many perils by that course which Mr. Wordsworth calls "laying on himself lowly duties." He might have been tempted for the sake of his family, for the enjoyment of the literary ease which he prized so highly, to have let out his pen to the service of some party, or some man. The schoolmaster in St. Bride's Court and in Aldersgate Street was able to be independent of politics, and therefore to be an honest politician.

If I do not give you extracts from any of his specially controversial writings—I have already given you one—it is not that I wish to pass them over because the conclusions in them are often directly opposed to mine, for I think that I have learnt most from those that are so; but because so much collateral information, which I have not the time if I had the power to give, is necessary to the illustration of them. But I must refer to two of his prose writings, because they illustrate some of the features in his character to which I have drawn your attention. The first is a speech which many of you will have read and re-read—it is that for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing. I must not take passages from it, though the temptation to do so is great; but I would have you remark that this magnificent discourse was addressed to that very Long Parliament on behalf of which he had struggled so passionately; which he had welcomed as the deliverer of the land. This Parliament,

in the exercise of what it supposed was a devout care of the faith and morals of the community, and that it might hinder the publication of some of those writings which Milton most disliked, undertook to establish licensers of the press. He had to encounter his own friends; it was their prejudices that he exposed and refuted. The soul which was "as a star which dwelt apart" from a low earthly expediency, never shone more clearly and brightly than when he stood forth to proclaim "that we should not affect a rigour contrary to the manner of God and of Nature, by abridging or scanting those means, which books freely permitted are, both to the trial of virtue and to the exercise of truth." For he adds, "Were I the chooser, a dram of well-doing should be preferred before many times as much the forcible hindrance of evil-doing."

The second book to which I alluded was Milton's Letter to Mr. Hartlib, on Education. I am not going to tell you what the scheme of instruction was which he desired for his pupils, or to inquire whether it was a reasonable or unreasonable one. There may be all possible differences about that question; there can be none about the fervent practical zeal with which he devoted himself to the consideration of the subject. He did not "lay lowly duties upon himself" that people might call him humble, or only that he might obtain food for his family. He resolved to show that the work of teaching boys is "lowly," because everything good is lowly; that being so, it is a grand task, worthy of the noblest intellect

which the world has ever seen; and that such an intellect ought to be exercised in showing how the theory of education could be reformed, how its practice could be made effectual. What was remarkable in the reform that he proposed, was this. It was not such as any one would have naturally expected a poet, and a man deeply conversant with ancient lore, to produce. He would make the study of words subsidiary to the study of things; he would connect lessons in agriculture with lessons in grammar; but this he would do for the cultivation of his pupils' minds and characters, not that he might advance them in the world. He dreaded the mercenary tendencies of the education which he saw established in England; to make it more mercenary was the last aim that he set before himself, or before any of his countrymen.

The writings of Milton as Cromwell's secretary were chiefly in Latin. He certainly did not enter the service of the Protector without entertaining the most hearty sympathy for him and for his cause. He supposed him to be the champion of order and of freedom; the assertor of an actual Divine government over men. Having adopted that conviction it was not in him to shrink from any vehemence in support of it; to use any soft or mild phrases in denouncing those men, learned or unlearned, who pleaded on the side of his opponents. If you ask me whether he was not often coarse, savage, personally abusive, I should answer, Undoubtedly he was; sometimes in his English writings,

much more when he was using a vocabulary which did not suggest to him domestic and human thoughts, which he could half regard as a rusty and worn-out weapon even when he was striking the hardest blows with it. I do not justify this opinion; but it seems to have been entertained by men who in their private intercourse must have exhibited much kindliness and urbanity. And those who have known anything of the temptations of controversy when that temptation has not been added to it, when they were using their own English tongue, in an age much more bland and delicate than the age of the Stuarts, will tremble before they cast stones at the images of their forefathers for the offences of this kind which they committed. It is better, instead of doing that, to take home the painful and humiliating lesson, that Milton's nobleness and piety are not able to make his cruel and unjust words tolerable, but only bring their ugliness into greater relief; to recollect, that if ours are less offensive, it is because there is less in them to make men feel this contrast; to assure ourselves, that if we profess to care for our cause more than for ourselves, Milton, who certainly did that, weakened his cause, and brought discredit upon it, by every personality to which he resorted in defence of it.

I am not, as you see here, Milton's panegyrist or apologist. I want to discover the course and purpose of his life; in that, and not in my words, must be the apology or panegyric which he deserves. A man must

be understood before we can praise him or blame him. When we do understand him, if he is a great man we shall feel his faults very keenly; far more keenly than those of anyone whom we reverence less—the light will show us the darkness.

I make this remark partly in connection with a class of Milton's writings from which I vehemently dissent, those which concern Marriage and Divorce. His practical conclusions upon these subjects appear to me all wrong; partly adopted from the excess of that Hebrew temper which I said was so prominent in him, partly from what he saw and felt of the incongruity of many marriages which had been ratified by very holy sanction. But I cannot help confessing that my dislike of these writings is due in great measure to Milton himself. I speak both of his poetry and of his life. His first wife scorned him as a Puritan, and left him. He received her back, and for her sake supported and protected her Royalist relations through the times of the Commonwealth. Of his second wife he wrote these lines, which certainly express his inmost heart:—

"Methought I saw my late espousèd saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescu'd from death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom washt from spot of child-bed taint,
Purification in the Old Law did save,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind.

Her face was veil'd, yet, to my fancied sight,
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd
So clear, as in no face with more delight.
But, oh! as to embrace me she inclin'd,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night."

The last line signifies the period of Milton's story to which we have come; to that night of which he has spoken so often in what are sometimes called episodes from his great poem, but which I always regard as part of its very substance.

Dr. Johnson said, and many have said after him, that the reading of "Paradise Lost" is a task which people perform once and are glad never to resume. I do not wonder that this should be so. To have a book put into one's hands which one is told is very sublime, or devout, or sacred, or one of the great epics of the world, is to have a demand made on one's admiration to which we submit at first dutifully, and against which in a little while we feel an almost inevitable rebellion. I do not think, for myself, that I ever could care for "Paradise Lost" while it came to me under the seal of those grand titles; the reality of it seemed to disappear; it was very fine, no doubt; one was bound to pay it a respectful homage, but it belonged to another sphere from ours; one longed for more earthly and homely things. It is quite otherwise, I believe, when we receive it as the deepest, most complete utterance of a human spirit; when it comes forth as the final expression of the thoughts of a man who has been fighting a

hard battle, who appears to have been worsted in the battle, who thinks that he has fallen on evil days and evil tongues; whose eyes

> "roll'd in vain
> To find the piercing ray, and found no dawn;"

who was cut off from all the joys of nature at the very time when he was deserted and persecuted by his fellow-men. Hear in "Paradise Lost" the song of such a man, gathering up all the memories and experiences of the years through which he has passed, of the men with whom he has conversed, and of the books that he has loved. Read it as the expression of an unchanged and imperishable faith in the will of a Righteous Being, which disobedience can set at nought, against Whom all evil powers may strive but cannot prevail; read it as the assurance that that Will is the source of all the beautiful things which he can look upon no longer, of all the music which is in him, and which sounds through creation—read it thus, and you will need no critics to tell you about its sublimity, or to classify it with books to which it has probably very little resemblance. It will come to you with its own evidence and power, as the voice of a man, but a voice which can make the deepest mind of a grand age of English history intelligible to our age; a voice which can teach us how all ages are united in Him who is, and was, and is to come. That seems to me the way of reading "Paradise Lost;" and therefore it is that I said that the passages which exhibit to us the poet's personal sorrows and consola-

tions are no episodes in it, but give us the key to its inmost meaning.

"Thou hast given us 'Paradise Lost,' hast thou nothing to say of Paradise Found?" was the demand of Elwood, the Quaker, to whom the world is so deeply indebted for his care of the poet, for carrying him to the house of one of his friends in a genial climate, some distance from the plague-stricken city in which he habitually dwelt; most of all for the answer which he obtained to his appropriate and well-timed question. It was the fashion of former times greatly to disparage "Paradise Regained." In the reaction against that fashion recent commentators have, I think, unduly exalted it. I can conceive nothing more instructive or suggestive than the idea of the poem; nothing which throws more light upon the life of the Puritan period. And it is exquisite for its completeness as a work of art, exquisite for the self-restraint of the artist. But I miss the personal allusions; I think the absence of them has in part justified the disappointment which most readers feel in it. Milton appears to me greatest when he is on the ground of the Old Testament, comparatively feeble when he ventures into the region of the New Testament. He has been called, and not wrongly, our Hebrew Poet. On both these grounds I think the latest of his poems, "Samson Agonistes," is worthy to be the latest. I read it as a climax and summary of all that had gone before. Lord Macaulay, I know, found fault with it, and of course gave exceedingly clever reasons for setting it

below everything else which Milton wrote. I will not discuss those reasons; to one who looks at the question from a purely critical point of view, I have no doubt they are conclusive. But I have not assumed this point of view in any part of my lecture, and I cannot assume it now. Throughout I have striven to speak of "the man" Milton, and I know not where the man discovers himself more wonderfully than in Samson. He is himself the blind and captive Israelite. He seeks the sun and shade to hide himself from the daily task, the weary toil at the mill; he is soothed by the sympathy of the brethren of his tribe, speaking to him in those old Greek measures which had been in his ears from childhood, and which he loved to blend with the sterner thoughts of the Hebrews; he groans over the loss of his country's freedom and strength; he hears the mockery of the Philistines; he feels the invincible strength coming back to him that he may quell the proud of the earth and the aggressor; . . . he meditates on the ways of God, so various, and he might say contrarious, which are yet moving on to a blessed issue, and dies that he may conquer. Over him the dirge is sung:—

"But he, though blind of sight,
Despis'd and thought extinguisht quite,
With inward eyes illuminated,
His fierye vertue rouz'd
From under ashes into sudden flame,
. . . . .
Like that self-begott'n bird
In the *Arabian* woods embost,
That no second knows nor third,

> And lay erewhile a Holocaust,
> From out her ashie womb now teem'd,
> Revives, re-flourishes, then vigorous most
> When most inactive deem'd,
> And though her body die, her fame survives,
> A secular bird, ages of lives."

"Samson Agonistes" recalls me to the verses by another poet with which I began. The play is one of human weakness, as much as of strength; of weakness succeeding strength that strength may be perfected in weakness. So far, therefore, as Mr. Wordsworth's lines are a mere glorification of Milton, Milton himself is the best witness against them. So far as they commemorate a man who amidst disappointment and sorrow was enabled to bear witness of a Wisdom and Truth higher than his own, which claimed him for their minister and to which he submitted himself, I hope you will deem that they are confirmed by the little glance which we have been able this evening to take of his history. But in this I venture to dissent from Mr. Wordsworth: I believe that it would not have been good for England that Milton should have appeared in the reign of George III. or that he should appear in the reign of Queen Victoria. I believe he appeared in the hour that was best for him and for us; that he represented his own time; that his work should be to awaken the hearts and energies of men who may represent ours. And I believe that, in the truest sense, he and all men that have served their generation and are fallen asleep, are living at this hour; that they are with us as

witnesses of our acts and our failures; to reprove us if we are selfish men; to encourage us to walk in cheerful godliness; and to show us how our souls may "dwell apart" from the evils of our time, how we may lay upon ourselves whatever lowly duties it demands of us.

X.

MILTON CONSIDERED AS A SCHOOLMASTER.[1]

I PROPOSE to speak this evening of Milton as an actual schoolmaster, as well as of his letter to Mr. Hartlib, in which he expounds his idea of education. The subjects are distinct, though no person who really appreciates Milton would wish to separate them.

Edward Phillips, his nephew and pupil, tells us that "soon after his return from Italy he took him a lodging in St. Bride's Churchyard, when he first undertook the education and instruction of his sister's two sons, the younger whereof had been wholly committed to his charge and care. . . . . He made no long stay in these lodgings; the necessity of having a place to dispose his books in and other goods fit for the furnishing of a good handsome house, hastening him to take one. And accordingly a pretty garden-house he took in Aldersgate Street, and therefore the fitter for his turn by the reason of the privacy, besides that there are few streets in London more free from noise than that."

[1] Delivered at the Royal Institution, January 1857.

Dr. Johnson says, that all the biographers of Milton shrink from this passage in his life, or try to explain it away. The remark evidently does not apply to Phillips. He observes indeed that "Milton never set up for a public school to teach all the fry of the parish, but only was willing to impart his learning and knowledge to relations and the sons of gentlemen that were his intimate friends." But he does not even hint that he regarded this occupation as discreditable, or pretend that Milton undertook it gratuitously. Later writers whom Johnson had read may have taken up either of these opinions. If they did, no one could rebuke them with greater justice or better grace than himself. Probably they had formed some notion of a poet which made them anxious to associate him with mountains and streams, rather than with the streets of a city; or they had thought that he ought not to engage in any work that was likely to be attended with more trouble than reputation, or to earn his bread by anything except the pen, or the patronage of great men.

Johnson could refute every one of these notions from his own experience. Fleet Street was his proper home; he had been a schoolmaster; he knew how much labour and what little honour, sometimes how little bread, might come to those who were working with the pen. He had treated the patronage of great men with disdain. Moreover, he knew how few of the great poets of England had been nursed in these quiet retreats, or

engaged in those celestial occupations which these fantastical admirers had imagined for them.

Geoffrey Chaucer was probably born in London. He was Comptroller of the Petty Customs in the port of London. He fell into disgrace with the Court by the part he took in the election of a Lord Mayor. We have reason to remember these facts; for if we owe "the Testament of Love" and the "Legend of Fair Women" to the knowledge which he acquired in Courts, or while on foreign embassies, we should never, I conceive, have had the "Canterbury Tales," but for the acquaintance with homely English life which he learned as a London citizen. Edmund Spenser, again, was born in East Smithfield; and there is the sad—I fear not disproved—tradition, that he died for lack of bread in King Street, Westminster.

Shakspeare's earliest years might be passed in one of the counties of England—a county, by the way, singularly flat and dull—from which he might gather some hints for the forest of Arden, but which gave him no glimpse of hills or of sea. But all his manhood was spent in London, where he was busy amidst stage-lamps and with stage accounts, and was learning in Blackfriars and Eastcheap to understand princes and carriers, Romans and English, better than they were ever understood.

Milton's ties to London, to the vulgarest parts of its city, are still closer. His birthplace was Bread Street. The Spread Eagle, which was the sign that his father,

the scrivener, dwelt there, was the sign also that that father belonged to a worthy family, and reminded the boy that he had cause to honour him for having lost his inheritance. There the worthy tradesman worked hard and successfully, that his children might have no worse an education than he had in his younger days at Christ Church; there he imparted, to one of them at least, his passion for music, and his knowledge of it. There Milton may have learnt still more precious lessons from a mother known through all that neighbourhood for her charities. It was a step from that street to St. Paul's School, where he began, at ten years old, to purchase future blindness by intense study.

There were no doubt three breaks in his London life. One was passed at Cambridge. It must have affected his after-thoughts in many ways—none more than those which had reference to education. But assuredly the Cam never became in his mind a rival of the Thames. There are painful passages in an epistle to Charles Diodati about its reeds and its naked fields, in which there are no shades, and its unsuitableness for worshippers of the Muses, which one tries to forget and to balance against others, but which prove very decisively that a university which is exceedingly sacred to many of us, and which on the whole has paid him a very hearty reverence, was not dear to him, either during the years which he passed at it, or even in retrospection.

It must have been quite otherwise with his father's

house at Horton, in Buckinghamshire. The five genial years which produced "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," "Comus," "The Arcades," "Lycidas," must have been full of all rich impressions from the sights and sounds of nature, such as were certainly not to be found or created in Bread Street. The wonderful assemblage of clear, bright, joyful images at the beginning of "L'Allegro" would be proof enough that knowledge was at no entrance there shut out from the poet, that light and life were streaming into him at every pore. And there, also, he made acquaintance not only with the lark and the sweetbriar and the eglantine; he not only listened—

> "How the hounds and horn
> Cheerly rouse the slumb'ring morn,
> From the side of some hoar hill,
> Through the high wood echoing shrill;"

but he became acquainted with Ludlow Castle, connected with the actual inhabitants of it his pure and beautiful visions of the lady who resisted the enchanter, of her brothers, and the attendant spirit. Still, even in this period, which is so especially devoted to the country and country pleasures, we hear, in his second defence, of his paying visits to London that he might buy books, and perfect himself in music and mathematics. And there are indications, I think, in all the poems of this time that he expected to find himself again in his old haunts amidst hard work, and that the "fresh woods and pastures new," of which he speaks

in "Lycidas," might be far more tangled and far less green pastures than those which he had lately visited.

His visit to Italy was indeed the immediate occasion of that line, and may have fulfilled it in its simplest sense. No one was ever so well prepared as he was for some of the sights which greeted him there; no one could have been so unprepared for the praises which he received from scholars, who, as he says, were not forward to bestow such on men of this side the Alps. It gives one a wonderful sense of the substantial and stable quality of his mind and character, that he could sustain the weight of outward beauty which crushes so many for whom it has not half the attraction that it had for him, and of flatteries coming from men whom he could appreciate, and which he knew were paid to the writings in which he had shown least of his genius. If he had been educated under a Puritan teacher, it does that teacher the highest honour; it shows him worthy of all the affection Milton expressed for him, that he had not made his scholar insensible to one graceful or beautiful impression, but that he had given him the secret of not surrendering to impression his Northern and English character. But I believe his safety lay in the strength and in the depth of his sympathy. He cared for Italy too much not to feel its sufferings more keenly than its praises. The friendship of Manso reminded him how the poet whom he had loved and helped had

> ". . . . in his youth begun in gladness,
> But thereof came in the end despondency and madness."

The lesson was too serious and awful not to be laid to heart by one who was himself in the prime of manly strength, and beauty, and enjoyment. And no doubt the sight of Galileo, grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Dominican and Franciscan licensers thought (so he speaks in his "Areopagitica"), may have had a considerable effect in determining him not to stay on that enchanted ground, and even to abandon his long-formed intention of visiting Athens, rather than be away from the city of London at a moment when England was astir, and when he thought he might do somewhat to direct the thoughts and kindle the hopes of his countrymen. To London, at all events, he came again in the year 1639, just when the King was making his second attempt to subdue the Scots. And it was then he went to Russell, the tailor, in St. Bride's Churchyard, and took lodgings for his pupils.

"Let not," says Johnson, "our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance, on the man who hastens home because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and when he reaches the scene of action vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school." Johnson does not explain exactly what degree of merriment his veneration for Milton permitted him; I should be happy to take part in it if I could see the point of the jest. He must have

perceived, I should think, that the edge of it was taken off by his own great and manly observation in answer to the Biographers, who represented Milton as a gratuitous teacher. If he was, as he undoubtedly was, a somewhat poor man, with tastes which might make money very desirable, and cultivated society very agreeable to him, I think the course he took was a singularly prudent and honourable one. He had determined—perhaps on quite insufficient grounds—but he had determined, that the cause of the Court was not the cause which an Englishman ought to espouse. That Court was one unusually fond of literature, unusually judicious in its patronage, certain at this time to be looking out for advocates who could defend its measures. The rumour that a young Englishman, who had earned panegyrics and prizes in different academies of Italy, had just returned to his own land, was likely enough to reach the ears of those who would convey it to the Archbishop or to the Queen. There was nothing in Milton's previous history which could prove him to be an impracticable subject for solicitations from those who could make solicitations agreeable. He had not written against Court entertainments, like Prynne or Leighton; he had himself been the author of a Masque. Noble families could speak favourably of him. If he had uttered some strange words in a University poem, or if his connections were with the Puritans, it might be all the more desirable to break those notions and that connection before any mischief

resulted from either. Such calculations were most reasonable; Milton could not help knowing that they were. He was never without a proper and manly self-appreciation; everything in his recent experience must have confirmed it. Under such circumstances, what could a sincere man, aware of his own weakness, do better than, in the first place, cultivate a severe kind of life which should make the attractions of luxury comparatively indifferent to him; secondly, take some means of providing himself with necessaries which should raise him above the peril of being induced to use his pen for that purpose; thirdly, select an occupation which would make him a less creditable associate for those who might have been glad to amuse themselves with his learning and eloquence? Milton might almost as much dread to be at the mercy of the party whose cause he espoused as of that which he opposed. Experience soon showed him how little he could support the views of either. He owed it, therefore, to truth that he should put himself so far as he could out of the temptation to this subserviency also.

There seems, therefore, no great excuse for the merriment into which Johnson was driven, in spite of his veneration for Milton. Vapouring away patriotism is undoubtedly a very bad thing in a private boarding-school, or elsewhere. But it seems not impossible that Milton betook himself to the private boarding-school, that his patriotism might not pass into vapour, that it might remain a substantial possession to him, and that

he might express it in the form which seemed to him the truest.

And he entered upon the work by which he was to earn a livelihood, and keep his honesty, as if it were a serious one into which it concerned his own honour and his country's that he should throw his whole heart. The situation for his school was not hastily chosen. Aldersgate, as Edward Phillips has told us, was one of the quietest streets in London. In Mr. Cunningham's excellent handbook there is a passage respecting it, taken from Howell's "Londonopolis," which may give us some notion of its likeness to that in which the Post Office now stands. That lively and spirited sketch of London was published in 1657, eighteen years after Milton hired his house. "This street," says Howell, "resembleth an Italian street more than any other in London, by reason of the spaciousness and uniformity of building, and straightness thereof, with the convenient distance of the houses; on both sides whereof there are diverse fair ones, as Peterhouse, the palace now and mansion of the most noble Marquis of Dorchester. Then is there the Earl of Thanet's house, with the Moon and Sun taverns, very fair structures. Then is there, from about the middle of Aldersgate Street, a handsome new street, butted out and fairly built by the company of Goldsmiths, which reached athwart as far as Red Cross Street." You will find from Mr. Cunningham that two members of the Cabal, Lord Shaftesbury and the Duke of Lauderdale, had after-

wards houses in this street; that Peterhouse was bought by the See of London, when the Great Fire had destroyed the episcopal residence in St. Paul's Churchyard; and that a Bishop was residing in it as late as 1720. Milton must have strained a point to secure a house in such a street so occupied. But we learn from his letters to Mr. Hartlib how much the character of the place appeared to him to affect the quality of the education given in it.

There he received the sons of some of his more intimate friends. One speculates naturally about the possible names of these friends, but not to much profit. Charles Diodati, the correspondent of his early years, was lately dead. Milton had lamented him in a Latin Elegy, which Johnson condemns for its pastoral affectations, but which may, perhaps, conceal under that veil deeper feelings than he cared to express in his own person, and yet which required some utterance. Henry Lawes—

> "Whose tuneful and well-measured song
> First taught our English music how to span
> Words with just note and accent, not to scan
> With Midas' ears, committing short and long;"

and whom he had claimed as the Casella of another Dante, had already been associated with him.

> "Lawrence, of virtuous father virtuous son,"

is another with whom he seems to have lived on terms of cheerful intimacy. He asks:—

"Now that the fields are dank, and ways are mire,
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire
Help waste a sullen day?"

But he lives for us only in this invitation.—Another of his friends was Cyriack Skinner—

"Whose grandsire on the royal bench
Of British Themis, with no mean applause,
Pronounced, and in his volumes taught, our laws."

To him he wrote that pleasant sonnet in which he bids him

"To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench
In mirth that after no repenting draws."

To him he wrote that grand sonnet upon his blindness; so that he must have been a friend in various changes of grief and joy. One passage in Phillips seems to suggest the possibility of his being a pupil. With other more illustrious friends he had probably not yet made acquaintance.

"Vane, young in years, but in sage counsels bold,"

as well as Fairfax and Cromwell, must still have been strangers to him. We can make no safe conjectures, therefore, about those who may have thought him fit to form their sons or kinsmen into scholars and citizens. Our knowledge of his lessons, and of the effects of them, must be derived from his two nephews, the Phillipses, with whom his work began.

I will not extract the description which Edward Phillips gives from his own recollection of the studies

in Aldersgate Street, because I shall have to give much of it in a more expanded form, when I speak of the "Letter to Mr. Hartlib." But the testimony which he bears to Milton's unsparing industry, to his freedom from pedantry, to the example which he set his pupils of indifference to ordinary indulgences, and yet to the frank, hearty mirth with which he kept his occasional "gaudy days" among some beaux of Gray's Inn—"not nearly so bad," Phillips adds, "as the beaux of our days"—might help to remove a good many apprehensions respecting him which are derived from third-hand reports, or pure fancy.

And this evidence is of the more value because it was given in very mature life by a man who had not imbibed Milton's politics; and who knew, also, and frankly confessed, that there were other parts of his mind and character which he had imbibed as little. Thanks to the indefatigable industry of the author of "Caleb Williams," we know a good deal of both of the Phillipses. The story is not altogether a pleasant one, but it ought to be told, as all truth should be, especially when for any reason we feel tempted to conceal it.

The elder sister of John and Edward Phillips was that "fair infant dying of a cough" who is celebrated in one of Milton's earliest poems. He consoled, you may remember, the mother, to whom he was tenderly attached, with the thought "of the present she to God had sent," and with the hope of an offspring who "should make her name to live." That was an uncle's

prophecy, which he did his best to fulfil, but which was not fulfilled. Milton took charge of the boys, who were, the one ten, and the other nine. Both became vigorous and persevering men of letters. John's work began when he was under twenty. He wrote an answer to an anonymous attack upon his uncle's "Defence for the People of England," Milton probably correcting the Latin, and pointing some of the sentences. In 1655, he used his pen for a very different purpose. He produced what he called "A Satire against Hypocrites." The objects of it were the Presbyterians and the Presbyterian clergy. We might suppose he was writing in the interest of the Independents. But it was not so. He had become a Royalist, and a Royalist of the species which Clarendon denounces almost as vehemently as Mrs. Hutchinson; of that species which had brought the cause into disgrace with the people, and had done so much to secure the success of Cromwell's Ironsides. Then he became a writer of prophetical almanacks. The first, published in 1660, hinted dimly at the confusions of the time and the hopes of the Stuarts. The second, in 1661, was reckless and furious against those whom he had defended in his Latin arguments five years before. One sentence, quoted by Mr. Godwin, about the execution of the Regicides, is as atrocious and brutal a one as a dissolute and heartless partisan ever indited. It need hardly be said that all the politics of this most earnest period only furnished John Phillips with occasion for jesting. But it was the same,

also, with the most wholesome and manly literature of other ages. He wrote a wretched travestie of the fifth and sixth books of the Æneid, intimating an opinion—which I can believe in such a man was a sincere one—that Virgil himself was only at bottom a writer of burlesque. Becoming a bookseller's hack, he continued the "Chronicle of Heath," into which he introduced this passage :—

"To better also the condition of the King our Sovereign Charles II. as to his kingdoms, came forth several defences of his authority in several treatises, especially that of Salmasius, called the Royal Defence, which our Milton, since stricken with blindness, cavilled at."

It is a worthy and suitable conclusion of such a history that John Phillips afterwards appeared as a defender of Oates, and an instrument of Shaftesbury; that as soon as James succeeded to the throne he addressed him in fulsome panegyric, and that he translated "Don Quixote" to suit, as he said, the manners of the time, substituting vulgar and stupid English allusions for the pure wit and high feelings of Cervantes. This man, however, seems to have had a prodigious industry, to have done his work for the booksellers with creditable care; and, when he spoke of subjects that had nothing to do with his own time, to have exhibited powers of original thought and reflection.

Edward Phillips was a very different man from his brother. He went to Magdalen Hall, Oxford; found it under severe Puritan government; took the same

infection which John Phillips had taken, and brought forth a book called "The Mystery of Law and Eloquence," which, judging from Mr. Godwin's extract, must have been as licentious, though not nearly so malignant, as the Satire on Hypocrites.

After this first outbreak, his character, as well as his pursuits, took a higher tone. He devoted himself to History and to Philology, and wrote a continuation of Baker's Chronicle, and what he called a "New World of Words." He became tutor to a son of Evelyn, who would certainly not have chosen him unless he had thought well of his conduct and principles. His "Theatre of the Poets," on which Sir Egerton Brydges has bestowed rather extravagant praise, shows at least a wide acquaintance with ancient and modern writers. In it he speaks with fraternal partiality of John Phillips, and with affectionate reverence of his uncle. His "Biography of Milton" was nearly his latest work. It is much more meagre than one could wish, but it is simple, earnest, unaffected. In his "Theatre of the Poets," Milton's style has evidently been a temptation to him. He often becomes inflated in the desire to imitate it. Here he speaks truly as from himself.

I admit, therefore, that in the only two cases we know of Milton's education, it produced quite other fruits than he would have desired. That his pupils became Royalists might not seem as great a fall to us as it must have done to him; that one of them, at least, became a frivolous, dishonest, heartless Royalist, must,

I should think, appear equally shocking to true men of every party. And I am far from denying that the elevation of Milton's own mind may have contributed to this result. A young man who felt the contrast between it and the mind he was cherishing in himself, would wrap himself in greater baseness to escape the reproach. The Phillipses are fair specimens of the reaction against Puritanism, which was taking place in a number of youths before the Restoration, and which was to exhibit itself in the nation at large afterwards. I have no doubt that a Royalist teacher of high and elevated character might have driven John Phillips into a furious self-willed Puritanism. A man of a lower tone in either party would probably have suited him better.

Dr. Busby's discipline might have scourged him into a man, while Milton's only provoked him into becoming a very vulgar gallant. All this should be frankly acknowledged, that we may estimate his education rightly. But it should also be remembered that the Phillips who talked of "the old man that was stricken with blindness," never, so far as can be made out, in one single passage of his numerous writings, spoke of his uncle's lessons as partaking of those qualities which gave the occasion to his satire. He probably hated him very bitterly; but he did not pretend that he had done anything to make moral principles, or the Christian faith, look mean in his eyes.

I believe, then, we may set this down as one instance

of the disappointments of which the life of every great man, and of every age, reveals a series. I know disappointments will be pleaded, by any who need them, as arguments that great men should not exist, or that all their greatness is imaginary. They will be pleaded also, as proofs that there is no Providence over the world—that we are left to the empire of chance. They who choose may find in them arguments for humility, and therefore for hope. They may feel that a Paradise Lost is necessary to a Paradise Regained; that Samson must have been a captive, and blinded and mocked, that he might come forth a conqueror.

Dr. Johnson observes that out of Milton's wonder-working academy, nothing proceeded but Phillips's "Theatre of the Poets." If he had known what else the Phillipses produced besides that, he would not perhaps have thought better of the academy, for his Toryism never made him tolerant of profligacy and insincerity. But the phrase "wonder-working" is entirely due to himself. Milton never boasted of the academy as having produced any wonders, or as being likely to produce them; he never, so far as I know, alludes to his own experiment in education; certainly he does not in the "Letter to Mr. Hartlib," which is the treatise especially devoted to that subject. We know by accident, from Edward Phillips's Life, that he did attempt with his own pupils, on a small scale, that which he supposes might be attempted in his ideal school. It is a great satisfaction to know that he did not write that

book merely as a theorist, that the boys of whom he speaks are not mere paper boys, that he had actually put his hand to the plough, if he had not any great results to show from his tillage; but for anything which his tract says to the contrary, it might have been written by a teacher who was lamenting his blunders as much as by a man who was rejoicing in his success. It is unquestionably the work of a man aiming at a standard which he has not reached and which he does not expect to see reached by himself, or in his own day, which it is nevertheless right to set forth because people of other days who never knew him, and probably would have refused to profit by anything that he said, might be the better for it. Accepting the book in this sense, I think it may at least be worth our while to see whether it tells us anything which can help to make us better. If we take his scheme as a subject for our criticism, we may say very clever things about the absurdity or the impracticability of this or that part of it, or in a different mood of mind we may resolve that we should gain immensely if we could substitute it for all the plans which we have inherited or invented; but in either case I apprehend we should be doing equal wrong to Milton and to ourselves. Every man whose thoughts have lived has known that he could only be the teacher of another age so far as its own circumstances and trials made his words applicable to it; and that a number of his words would be thrown aside as inapplicable provided it was to profit by the rest. And we surely in our turn ought

to know that the more we are disposed to learn and the less we are inclined to cavil, the greater will be our security against adopting that which is not intended for us, the greater our chance of discovering that which is.

"I am long since persuaded," he begins, "that to say or do aught worth memory and imitation, no purpose or respect should sooner move us than simply the love of God and of mankind. . . . I will not resist therefore whatever it is of human or divine obligement that you lay upon me, but will forthwith set down in writing, as you request me, that voluntary idea of a better education, in extent and comprehension far more large, and yet of time far shorter, and of attainment far more certain, than hath been yet in practice. Brief I shall endeavour to be; for that which I have to say, assuredly this nation hath extreme need should be done sooner than spoken. To tell you therefore what I have benefited herein among old renowned authors, and to search what many modern Januas and Didactics, more than ever I shall read, have projected, my inclination leads me not; but if you can accept of these few observations which have flowered off, and are, as it were, the burnishing of many studious and contemplative years, altogether spent in the search of religious and civil knowledge, and such as pleased you so well in the relating, I here give you them to dispose of."

Schemes for increasing the extent of knowledge and shortening the time for acquiring it, have become so rife among us in these later years, that we listen with a

natural kind of suspicion to any of them by whomsoever propounded, and assume that there must be quackery, conscious or unconscious, at the bottom of it. But assuredly Milton did not contemplate lessening the depth and sincerity of learning by his suggestions for enlarging the compass of it. It was this depth and sincerity which he complained of as wanting in the schools and universities of his day. Nor was he revolutionary in this sense, that he undervalued the principle which he found to be implied in the teaching of those institutions. Languages had been his own favourite study; languages had been the professed study of his countrymen, and with languages he begins. The maxim that "language is but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known," which underlies his whole treatise, might lead us to suppose that he did not value it at all as a direct means of culture; but this conclusion would be a hasty one. He evidently considered that the study of the substance of good books was the way, and the only way, to arrive at the living apprehension and mastery of their language, and therefore at any of the sound mental discipline which a language may impart. On this ground it is that he protests against what he calls "the preposterous exaction of forcing the empty wits of children to compose themes, verses, and orations, which are the acts of ripest judgment, and the final work of a head filled by long reading and observing with elegant maxims and copious invention. These are not matters," he says, "to be

wrung from poor striplings like blood out of the nose, or the plucking of untimely fruit; besides the ill habit which they get of wretched barbarizing Anglicisms against the Latin and Greek idiom, odious to be read, yet not to be avoided without a well-continued and judicious conversing among pure authors digested." These remarks you perceive, whether just or not in themselves, are the utterances of a scholar, even of a somewhat fastidious scholar. His compassion to boys is sustained by a great horror of their solecisms. He would save them from exercises which he regards as useless and cruel at the time when they are imposed; but it is that they may be better fitted to perform those exercises afterwards. Such sentiments at all events do not come inconsistently from a man who had written so much Latin poetry himself, and who made it the condition of his accepting the Secretaryship under Cromwell that the correspondence with Foreign Powers should be in Latin as a common language for intercourse.

It is, however, quite true that Milton aspired to make the grammar-school a real school. This is the characteristic feature of his education. Both here and in Germany the two kinds of instruction are opposed to each other; the teaching of words or of Philology is supposed to be one business; the teaching of business, or, as we sometimes say, of common things, to be another. He believed this division to be artificial and unnecessary; the best school in things he thought

would be the best school in words. I do not know whether he has anywhere expressed his opinion of Bacon, or whether he had studied the Novum Organon. The minds of the two men were so exceedingly unlike that it is quite possible he never fully appreciated his great predecessor; but the influence of his habits of thinking is most manifest in the treatise on Education. It is in fact an application of Bacon's maxims, and an attempt to destroy some of the very idols at which he had struck a blow. Thus he complains of the Universities that, "Instead of beginning with Arts most easy, *and those be such as are most obvious to the sense*, they present their young unmatriculated novices at first coming with the most intellective abstractions of Logic and Metaphysics." Here he distinctly points out the road to knowledge as starting from the objects of sense, as being tentative and experimental with reference to them, as leading onward by that method to the discovery of principles and truths. He declares, just as Bacon does, against the opposite course, of beginning from abstractions and conclusions of our intellects, as being fatal to all healthy progress and all certain results. It may be urged, indeed with great force, that such remarks applied much more properly to the Universities when they were frequented, as in Milton's day, by boys of fifteen or even of twelve, than they can do to this time; that the previous discipline in arts most easy and obvious to the sense, may have been well got through before the ages of eighteen or nineteen, and

that then Logic and Metaphysics may claim their rightful place as preparations for approaching manhood. I say nothing against or for these statements; only I think that in that case the countrymen of Bacon and of Milton should see to it that there *has* been that preliminary instruction, and that it has been well gone through, lest those consequences which he speaks of in his time should ever have to be mourned over in ours. "For these novices," he says, "having but newly left those grammatic flats and shallows, where they stuck unreasonably to learn a few words with lamentable construction, and now on the sudden transported under another climate to be tossed and turmoiled with their unballasted wits in fathomless and unquiet deeps of controversy, do for the most part grow into hatred and contempt of learning, mocked and deluded all this while with ragged notions and babblements, while they expected worthy and delightful knowledge, till poverty, or youthful years, call them importunately their several ways, and hasten them with the sway of friends either to an ambitious and mercenary, or ignorantly zealous, divinity. Some allured to the trade of law, grounding their purposes not on the prudent and heavenly contemplation of justice and equity, which was never taught them, but on the promising and pleasing thoughts of litigious terms, fat contentions, and flowing fees. Others betake them to State affairs, with souls so unprincipled in virtue and true generous breeding, that flattery, and court shifts, and tyrannous aphorisms appear to them

the highest points of wisdom, instilling their barren hearts with a conscientious slavery, if as I rather think it be not feigned. Others, lastly, of a more delicious and airy spirit, retire themselves, knowing no better, to the enjoyments of ease and luxury, living out their days in feasts and jollity, which indeed is the wisest and safest course of all these unless they were with more integrity undertaken."

So far Milton has been speaking against some of the practices which he saw, and laying down principles for reforming them. Now he proceeds to the more hazardous task of tracing the outlines of his own plan. He begins with finding out a spacious house and ground about it fit for an academy, and big enough to lodge one hundred and fifty persons, whereof twenty or thereabouts may be attendants, all under the government of one. Everyone will perceive that the house in Aldersgate Street was only the attempt of an individual to do with the most imperfect appliances what he wished should be done, probably by the Government, though he does not directly say so, in every city throughout the land. This institution was to be both school and university: an unhappy and inconvenient arrangement, it seems to me, and one which would defeat many of the purposes which Milton had most at heart. As Edward Phillips went to Oxford, we may presume that his uncle did not at any rate suppose that his own school could serve this double purpose.

When he comes to the studies which are to be

pursued in the school or college, we find him attaching considerable importance to grammar, but still more to distinct and clear pronunciation, "as near as may be to the Italian, especially in the vowels." Obviously therefore Latin is in his school, as in others, the first instrument of the teacher; but it is an instrument, and he finds it not always a convenient one for his purpose. He complains that there are few books among the Latin classics, like Cebes and Plutarch, which would win them early to the love of virtue and true labour. The deficiency must be supplied by the teacher himself, "who is to use all books, whatsoever they be, to stir them up with high hopes of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear to God and famous to all ages." Some other hour of the day these younger pupils are to be taught the rules of arithmetic, and soon after the elements of geometry. After evening repast their thoughts will be best taken up in the easy grounds of religion, and the story of Scripture.

The next stage of Milton's education is to the authors on agriculture, Cato, Varro, and Columella; "for here," he says, "will be an occasion of inciting and enabling them hereafter to improve the tillage of their country, to recover the bad soil, and to remedy the waste that is made of good." Still the verbal education is going on with the real. The subject will make the words of the writers he has named enter into their minds. When they can construe them, they will be masters of any ordinary prose. Next he would have them learn in any

modern author the use of globes and of maps, and read some compendious method of Natural Philosophy. Next we plunge into Greek, and a somewhat tremendous plunge it is! For having learnt the grammar with great expedition, Milton assures us that the historical physiology of Aristotle and Theophrastus will all be open before us. Then Greek and Latin authors together help in the principles of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and geography. We get instructed in fortification, architecture, engineering, or navigation. In Natural Philosophy we proceed leisurely from the history of meteors, minerals, plants, and living creatures as far as anatomy. Then we are to read out of some not tedious writer the institution of physics.

I am perfectly aware that a number of these suggestions would sound absurd and extravagant anywhere, and nowhere more absurd and extravagant than to an audience like this, which can estimate in some degree the depth and intricacy of those subjects of which Milton disposes so rapidly, and who also are not likely to set much store by the manuals out of which he would deliver his lessons. I do not suppose anyone would propose to teach agriculture in Cato, or Natural Philosophy in Seneca. But the question which I started before I must renew now. Is it wiser to amuse ourselves with a great man, or to get the best wisdom we can out of him, leaving what does not suit us, as he would have wished that we should? The object of Milton is clearly not to cram his pupils with an im-

mense quantity of verbal information, but to bring all verbal information to a test, by connecting it with the operations of nature and of man. If his own amazing power of acquisition led him greatly to over-rate that of ordinary boys, and if the machinery he had to work with was a very awkward and cumbrous one, we might surely correct his over-doing by continually recurring to the end for which he recommends it, and avail ourselves of our own advantages to remove embarrassments from his method which he would have rejoiced to remove if he had known how. And I think you will allow that if Milton is an Idealist, he is a stern Realist too; one who would have us always conversant with facts rather than with names; one who aims as directly at the useful as the most professed Utilitarian could do. His reason for giving his pupils a knowledge of physics is that "perchance one of them may some time or another save an army by this frugal and expenseless means, and not let the healthy and stout bodies of young men under him rot away for want of this discipline, which is a great pity and no less a shame to the commander." To set forward their proceedings in nature and mathematics, he would have them procure, as oft as shall be needful, the helpful experiences of hunters, fowlers, fishermen, shepherds, gardeners, apothecaries; and in the other sciences architects, engineers, mariners, anatomists: and this will give them such a real tincture of natural knowledge as they shall never forget, but daily augment with delight. Hesiod

and Theocritus, Lucretius and the "Georgics" of Virgil he thinks will add to the delight of these studies, and will be far more understood and relished than they are wont to be, by those who have taken some part in them.

I do not suppose that I have much occasion to deal here with the objections of Johnson against this method of instruction, which are grounded upon the comparative insignificance of a knowledge of external nature, and of the sciences which that knowledge requires or includes. But I may observe that never were good and well-delivered sentences more thrown away, or more utterly inappropriate to the purpose for which they are used, than those in which he maintains that moral knowledge is superior to physical, and that the main end of education is to fit us for living as true men. No principle is so constantly asserted throughout Milton's tractate as that; no one was more worked into the whole tissue of his instruction. Instead of using the classics as they are often used in schools, with the apology that they are very useful for forming a style or some such beggarly purpose, but with a half doubt whether they may not be undermining the moral sense of the pupils and contradicting higher truths, he uses orators, poets, lawgivers, simply as instruments for forming brave men and good citizens, maintaining that if they do not serve that purpose it is the teacher's fault, because he misunderstands the nature of his pupils and the end of life, or the relation of the

wisdom in these books to a more perfect wisdom. Everything in his lessons from first to last is aiming at the formation of a manly character, and an English character. Believing that the acquaintance with realities is precious for his pupil in each of these respects; that an Englishman is the most poor and helpless of all creatures when he is only busy about abstractions, the most vigorous and effectual when he is in converse with facts; believing that a man is meant to rule Nature, and must humble himself to it that he may understand it and so rule it, he does not shrink from recommending those studies as vital parts of a good education which Johnson regarded only as its extraneous accidents: but he just as little exalts natural studies as he exalts language into an end instead of an instrument. The test of both is to mould men who can fight the battle of life.

To this end he regards exercises as contributing no less than studies. "That exercise," he says, "which I recommend first, is the exact use of their weapon, to guard and to strike safely with edge and point. This will keep them healthy, nimble, strong, and well in breath; is also the likeliest means to make them grow large and tall, and to inspire them with a gallant and fearless courage, which, being tempered with seasonable lectures and precepts to them of true fortitude and patience, will turn into a native and heroic valour, and make them hate the cowardice of doing wrong. They must also be practised in all the locks and gripes of

wrestling, wherein Englishmen were wont to excel, as need may often be in fight to tug and grapple and to close." In fact his education is very military, for "about two hours before supper they are, by a sudden alarm or watchword, to be called out to their military motions under sky or cover according to the seasons; first on foot, then, as their age permits, on horseback. They are in sport, but with much exactness and daily muster, to serve out the rudiments of their soldiership in all the skill of embattling, marching, encamping, besieging, and battering, with all the helps of ancient and modern stratagems, tactics, and warlike maxims." "Besides these constant exercises at home," he adds, "there is another opportunity of gaining experience, to be won from pleasure itself abroad. In those vernal seasons of the year when the air is calm and pleasant, it were an injury against Nature not to go out and see her riches and partake in her rejoicing. I should not therefore be a persuader to them of studying much then, but to ride out in companies with prudent and staid guides to all the quarters of the land, learning and observing all places of strength, all commodities of building and of soil for towns and tillage, harbours, and ports of trade; sometimes taking sea as far as to our navy, to learn there also what they can in the practical knowledge of sailing and sea-fight."

By these means he hopes to cultivate the peculiar gifts of his pupils, and "if there were any secret excellence among them, to fetch it out;" and this he thinks would

restore many old virtues and excellences to our land which its higher Christian knowledge would prevent from degenerating into violence and brutality. To counteract these indeed is the great end of all his discipline. No one speaks more of refined breeding and culture as being desirable and possible for all people whatsoever. No one takes what I suppose we should all consider more rational means for promoting it. The study of music, as we might expect, is an essential element of his education. It is not reserved for a few fortunate persons, but is to be used for the benefit of the whole school, expressly "because, if wise men and prophets be not extremely out, it has a great power over dispositions and manners, to smooth and make them gentle from rustic harshness and distempered passions."

I had intended to make many apologies for speaking to you upon a subject very unlike those with which you are ordinarily instructed and entertained here, and which, besides its strangeness, is deficient in all the aids which those subjects derive from brilliant experiments and skilful exposition. But I have thought that on the whole Milton might make the apology better than I could. His object as a schoolmaster was to unite natural studies with human studies, that both might contribute to the formation of just men and a sound Commonwealth. I believe that is the object which the conductors of this institution have at heart, and which perhaps they may aid by lessons of which he was ignorant; but as I am sure that one of the chief

lessons which your studies of the mysteries of the universe teach you, is humility, you will not be ashamed to learn from a man who may have made a thousand mistakes which we need not make, but who nevertheless had a wisdom and a righteousness of purpose in him which the best and truest living will most delight to honour and to possess.

XI.

EDMUND BURKE.[1]

I SHALL make no apology for speaking to you, to members of a Literary Society, on the life of a great English statesman. I believe that you desire, as far as in you lies, to allay party fevers; to substitute questions of general interest for those which agitate particular localities. I do not know how you can promote either end more effectually than by reflecting on the history of a man, who was mixed in the party strifes of his own day, who did not escape from them unscathed, yet who was continually seeking for principles which belong to all times. Now that he has been almost sixty years in his grave, when there are so very few left who heard his words or even remember the influence he exerted on his contemporaries, we can understand what there is of him which has passed away and what there is which has survived, and will always survive. The result, I am sure, will not lead us to care more for mere accidental and temporary excitements; it may teach us that we cannot safely separate

[1] Delivered at the Bury St. Edmunds Literary Society, 1857.

our literary pursuits, even our literary recreations, from the history and life of our nation.

Edmund Burke, however, was a man of letters as well as a statesman. Other questions interested him, besides those which came under his notice in the House of Commons; what did come under his notice there, he spoke of in words which have delighted numbers who thought little of the special occasions which called them forth. I might limit myself to the consideration of him as an Essayist and an Orator, forgetting that he had ever argued for Economical Reform, or impeached Warren Hastings, or arraigned "a regicide peace." But I confess that he does not interest me chiefly as either statesman, essayist, or orator—that I should not care for him in any of these characters if I did not perceive that he was first of all a Man. I may disagree with a number of his opinions; I shall not tell you with how many I agree or disagree. But he himself, I think, is a subject worthy of all study, and of very sincere affection. That I may know him, I must get what light I can from any of his acts or discourses. Whatever names they bear, however they may be classified, they will show us something of him; it may be his weakness, it may be his strength. Only I find it a good rule, when I am contemplating a person from whom I want to learn, always to look out for his strength, being confident that the weakness will discover itself, as far as it is good for me to be aware of it, without seeking for it.

Edmund Burke was born in Dublin, in the year 1730. He was the Irishman of the last age, as the Duke of Wellington was the Irishman of this. But it was easier to guess the nationality of the first than of the second; for we assume that every Irishman is born an orator, and this is just the faculty which the great soldier did not possess. There was no early development of it in Burke. The younger Pitt is said to have been set upon a chair by his father and to have delivered speeches when he was six years of age—a story illustrating the vanity which mixed with the nobler qualities of the Earl of Chatham. Burke, to all appearance, escaped the terrible calamity of being a youthful prodigy. There are no reports, so far as I know, of any extraordinary feats that he did in the way of learning, or of any wonderful sayings that he uttered. He was sent to the school of a Mr. Shackleton, a modest and sensible Quaker, who probably checked any tendency there might be in him to premature display; a good reason, if it was so, why Burke should have loved him, as we know he did, to the end of his days. This reverence for his master, and his cordial affection for his brother and several of his schoolfellows, afforded a better promise, I conceive, for the future, intellectually as well as morally, than the most rapid growth in abilities and acquisition would have done. The open-hearted, warm-hearted boy draws in nourishment from all that he sees, hears, and reads; the clever boy often gives out more than he receives.

Burke went from Mr. Shackleton's school to Trinity College, Dublin. He was younger than boys at our Universities are, only fourteen, when he entered the College, and eighteen when he took his degree. Of those years likewise, there are no very clear records. One cannot make out that he shone among his contemporaries, or that he won any conspicuous honours. But he never can have been idle, never without a purpose. He may not have framed to himself a distinct plan of his future life. Very few do that; and those who do are not always the wisest. A young man cannot predict into what circumstances he may hereafter be thrown, or what work may be provided for him. He can be learning how men of other days have thought, and acted, and fought their way; he can be finding out what he is capable of, he can be struggling with the petty distractions and temptations of each hour. Burke may not have been making this preparation the less because his path was a quiet one. He was involved enough in the bustle of the world afterwards. It was probably just as good for him that he did not anticipate it at College, and that he did not come up to London preceded by any flourish of trumpets to tell what he was going to be.

In 1750 he was in London, at the Middle Temple. His father was an attorney, and wished him no doubt to distinguish himself at the English bar. He must have been acquiring a knowledge of law while he was in the Temple, for he showed that he had it afterwards

when he became a statesman. But he does not seem to have been able to connect the study of it with the practice of it. That he declined to engage in, then. And I should imagine, from remarks he made upon lawyers afterwards, when he was drawing a spirited sketch of the character of Mr. George Grenville, that the resolution was formed deliberately, and that he did not regret it. Whether he took a wiser and safer course in giving himself to literature, and in becoming a writer for periodicals, I dare not pronounce. Men are conducted in strange ways. A better Wisdom than their own shapes their ends; their self-will is sometimes turned to their discipline and instruction. Certainly Burke did not avoid, as no man will, temptations and vexations by entering upon this path. He never, it would appear, had to struggle with the poverty which some of the friends whom he knew in later years encountered. He brought some money with him; he had not the recklessness which we are apt to attribute to his countrymen; the tasks which he undertook under the patronage of the booksellers were wisely selected, and proved in general prosperous. It was seven or eight years, however, before he entered upon the most judicious and successful of them, the "Annual Register;" and in the meantime he may have experienced many of the hopes deferred, the sickening disappointments, the sore struggles with the question, whether it is not well to part with a little honesty for the sake of pleasing the public, which most who give up a

profession for the sake of what they suppose is the greater freedom and elevation of a literary life have to endure.

Seeing, however, that he was destined to be a politician hereafter, all this training was, I have no doubt, very profitable to him. It brought him into acquaintance with men and books together—with common men and not with fine men, with books that would enlarge the circle of his thoughts, his knowledge of other countries, and of history; not with books that would train him rapidly for a clerk or a diplomatist. He boasted in his later days, with great truth, that he was not "rocked and dandled into a legislator." This was no doubt a time when he was passing through a rough discipline, which fitted him to make laws by learning something of the men who have to obey them, possibly some of the motives which there are to break them. He learnt also to feel for the necessities of authors, a lesson of which not a few received the benefits in his own prosperity.

In your town, to Suffolk men, I need mention but one instance which gives him some claim upon your gratitude and that of all Englishmen. When the poor boy of Aldborough, George Crabbe, had served his apprenticeship to a surgeon near Bury, and then at Woodbridge, and had gone to London and made application to one patron after another, it was Burke who read the MSS. and the letter of the poor youth who was walking about in despair upon Westminster Bridge

and saved him from starvation to write "The Borough" and "The Tales of a Hall."

Though in one sense a servant of the booksellers, Burke was not merely doing such work as would bring in bread for the moment and then be forgotten. He made at least two permanent additions to the literature of his country. I must speak of them, because in different ways they illustrate the character of the man, and show how unlike his training for public employments was to that of most official men.

The first is entitled "A Vindication of Natural Society." This title may startle anyone who is acquainted with the general purpose of Burke's life, and with the maxims for which he was contending in every part of it. No one had less respect for the condition of the savage than he had; no one was less inclined to overthrow the order of society, and reconstruct it, by dwelling on what men might have been before they entered into it. He believed that men are social beings by God's constitution, and that they cannot be good for anything when they are not living as if they were. The notions which became exceedingly popular a short time afterwards, here as well as in France, those of which Rousseau was the great champion, about the necessity of sweeping away the vices of civilization by returning to the life of the woods, had never the slightest hold upon him; his mind, which was essentially historical, utterly rebelled against them; he scarcely did justice to that strong sense of the evils of

artificial life in which they originated. How then did he care to write a "Vindication of Natural Society"? The book is a parody upon the style and manner of Lord Bolingbroke. That writer had been very fond of maintaining that natural religion—by which he meant the religion that man discovers for himself—is all-sufficient for him; that a Revelation is altogether unnecessary, and has corrupted that which existed before it. The promulgator of this opinion was an eminently refined person, a despiser of the vulgar, a man formed by, and formed for, artificial life—who played occasionally with haycocks and pitchforks with a very graceful imitation of nature, but who would have liked as ill to have abandoned his dignities and worked for his food as anyone that ever existed. The wit of Burke's essay is that he supposes this very aristocratic man to maintain the advantage of a purely natural society upon the very same ground upon which he had maintained the advantages of a purely natural religion. The imitation of style was so skilful, that many are said to have been deceived by it. I cannot understand how such a mistake could have been possible for any who had the very slightest acquaintance with the designs or character of Bolingbroke. The outside resemblance only makes the internal contrast more striking. What I wish you, however, chiefly to recollect, is, that Burke did not appear in his first conspicuous work merely or chiefly as a successful jester. A parody may be very amusing; but he had as distinct and serious

a purpose in this as in any of his writings. It showed, among other things, what kind of statesmen he did not admire or aspire to resemble. Bolingbroke was the most showy of all political actors as well as writers. There was none by whom a young man was more likely to be attracted. He had taken what might strike anyone as a very comprehensive view of the state of parties in England. He had shown that he could adapt himself to the circumstances of the time, and be a friend of the Pretender, or of the Brunswick succession, a defender of the old country school, a liberal philosopher, each by turns, or even—so enlarged and elastic was his scheme of action—all at once. No one could utter finer or more fantastic maxims, no one had greater skill in making history illustrate what doctrines he wished it to illustrate. He was, moreover, the friend and teacher of Pope, the most popular poet of the eighteenth century, whom Burke doubtless heartily admired. There was much to captivate him in such a model; yet he was repelled, not captivated. He discerned petty spite against individuals who had injured him in the boaster of comprehensiveness; a strut and affectation and perpetual self-glorification in the would-be patriot; a want of any real reverence for men, or love of men, in the student of human actions. He appears therefore to have determined, very solemnly, that, whatever guide he followed, Bolingbroke should be his beacon, and not his guide. I see much of his own after-life in this resolution, and therefore I have

been more careful to speak of the book which contains the first indication of it.

The other book which Burke wrote at this time was "An Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas on the Sublime and Beautiful." I do not propose to follow him through this inquiry, though I conceive that it is an interesting one, and that the study of this treatise, if we agree with its conclusions ever so little, will be well rewarded. But you will be inclined to exclaim, "What! did he really intend to connect himself with the affairs of the country? Was he contemplating a seat in Parliament? And did he turn aside to write a treatise on a question of Taste, fit only for poets and artists?" I ought not to deny that it is a question about taste; for the introduction is entirely devoted to that subject. But his object is not to lay down certain rules or maxims as to that which we ought or ought not to like, but to find out whether there is not some ground on which our likings and dislikings rest, whether there are not some perceptions and feelings which are common to us all. All of us who are met in this room to-night have some admiration for the stupendous power of Nature, have some delight in what is graceful and harmonious. There may be a great many degrees in this admiration or this delight. They may be called forth by one object in one person, by another in another. The susceptibility of such emotions as well as the power of expressing them may be much greater in some poet like Mr. Wordsworth or Mr. Tennyson, than

in any of us. But then, why is it that we like to read the poems of a man who has more of this feeling than we have ourselves? Is it not because we look upon him as our spokesman? He brings out something that was hidden in us—that we did not know was in us. He says what we should like to say if we could. He is not, then, a more special man than we are; he is more of a common man. The human sympathies have been more awakened in him than in us. If so, it may surely be possible to find out what that is in us all which receives these impressions. We need not be at the mercy of every fine gentleman who says, "That is my taste; I like this or that work of nature or of art; I call it beautiful,—my opinion makes it so." But we may inquire whether there are not some principles which determine our admiration or enjoyment. We may treat men's thoughts on this subject, and the words in which they describe them, just as the chemist treats any material that falls under his analysis.

Now this is exactly what Burke has attempted. He uses this language at the outset of his inquiry, which is just such language as Mr. Faraday or Professor Owen would use about the subjects in which they are such acknowledged masters:—

"The term *taste*, like all other figurative terms, is not extremely accurate. I have no great opinion of a definition, the celebrated remedy for the cure of this disorder. For when we define, we seem in danger of circumscribing Nature within the bounds of our own

notions, which we often take up by hazard, or embrace on trust, or form out of a limited and partial consideration of the object before us, instead of extending our ideas to take in all that Nature comprehends, according to her manner of combining. A definition may be very exact, and yet go but a very little way towards informing us of the nature of the thing defined; but let the virtue of a definition be what it will, in the order of things, it seems rather to follow than to precede our inquiry, of which it ought to be considered as the result. It must be acknowledged that the methods of disquisition and teaching may be sometimes different, and on very good reason undoubtedly; but, for my part, I am convinced that the method of teaching which approaches most nearly to the method of investigation is incomparably the best; since, not content with serving up a few barren and lifeless truths, it leads to the stock on which they grew; it tends to set the reader himself in the track of invention, and to direct him into those paths in which the author has made his own discoveries, if he should be so happy as to have made any that are valuable."

I think, if you put these things together, you will agree with me that Burke may have been learning very useful lessons while he was pursuing this subject, —lessons respecting his fellow-men, lessons respecting the fixed principles there may be even in things that are most fluctuating, lessons respecting the right method of seeking for these principles. And these

lessons were, I conceive, just what he would need when he became a statesman. He would then find himself amidst a number of petty interests, and of men pursuing these interests to the forgetfulness of any high and general purposes. He might easily persuade himself that human beings had in them no faculties for wondering at what is sublime, or delighting in what is beautiful. It was surely good for him to have convinced himself beforehand that they had these faculties; that such gifts were not confined to a few favourites of fortune or men of letters, but that they dwell in the hearts of peasants and handicraftsmen, ready to be called forth when once the right spring is touched. This, I take it, was a very great truth indeed for a politician to be initiated into, and one which he was much less likely to discover after he had once begun to run in the political rut. And next, as he is perpetually in the midst of the most variable and changing accidents, as the events which he may be occupied with to-day are different from those with which he was occupied yesterday, as he has to notice endless vicissitudes of tempers and motives in men, he is very likely indeed to think that all things are subjects of accidents and caprice, that there is no order in the affairs of the world at all, that they are only pedants who talk about principles. You will allow that this is a most fatal impression for any man to receive, fatal to the honesty of an individual's life, and therefore fatal to the honesty of a statesman's life. And yet how great the temptation

to it must be! How much greater than we who are out of the vortex of that life can possibly conjecture! How almost impossible it must be for a man who is merely trained in diplomacy, or in managing popular assemblies, not to yield to it! But there is also the third danger, of a man becoming actually a pedant in his apparent zeal about principles, of his laying down certain rules and definitions for himself, and measuring the actions of men, the course of history, by these. So he may get himself a credit for rigidness of purpose and high consistency; yet all the while it will be a purpose of his own which he is following, not the Divine purpose. His consistency may arise from the very narrow horizon with which his sight is bounded; he may have no view to the right or the left; at last he may come to look at very little but his own shadow. That method, then, which Burke had learnt from men of science, and which he applied to questions of art, may have been of the greatest worth in showing him how he should deal with the subjects that presented themselves to him as a legislator. He was not to curb and control them by his notions and definitions; he was faithfully and laboriously, with ever fresh humility and confession of his own mistakes, to seek for the truth that was involved in them, that he might guide himself by it.

If you turn over any edition of Burke's works, you will probably find, next to the "Inquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful," two tracts: the first, "An Account

of a Short Administration;" the second, "Observations on a late publication entitled 'The Present State of the Nation.'" You will be inclined to ask, How can we bridge over the chasm between works of so strangely dissimilar a kind? I have given you one or two hints which may perhaps help you to answer the question, so far as the topics treated of, and the way of handling them, are concerned. But, of course, the change which they indicate in the author's pursuits and modes of life needs to be explained. Much indeed had passed in the interval between these publications; he had gone to Bath for his health, and been married. He had written for the publisher of his Essay "An Account of the European Settlements in America," and in preparing this task had acquired a far greater knowledge of English trade and of the principles of trade generally, than belonged to his contemporaries; he had commenced a History of England; he had traced the contemporary history in the "Annual Register." Then, in the year 1759, he returned to Ireland as private secretary to William Gerard Hamilton, the Chief Secretary of the Lord-Lieutenant. Hamilton was a man who liked reputation, and most prudently refused to risk it; he had delivered one speech in the House of Commons, and as that procured him the only advantage for which he supposed speeches are to be delivered, he never made another. He also liked patronage, and liked that those whom he patronized should be his slaves. Finding Burke an exceedingly useful slave, he wished

to retain him in that character. But as Burke had a strange and ungrateful preference for freedom, he resigned the pension which Hamilton had procured for him, and returned to England. Then he became private secretary to a much juster and wiser man, the Marquis of Rockingham. He received no salary from him, and he obtained a seat in Parliament without his aid; but he was deeply and personally attached to the Marquis, and it was the dismissal of his short Administration in 1766 which Burke commemorated in the first pamphlet to which I alluded. That pamphlet merely enumerates in a few clear, forcible words, the acts by which he judged that Lord Rockingham's Ministry had deserved the gratitude of the country. He had already defended some of those acts in the House of Commons; he had probably had much to do with the suggestion and preparation of them in the closet. And now it was perceived, by men who may not have been very willing to make the discovery, that a student of principles could be a more indefatigable drudge in working out details than those who never devoted themselves to any other business. This is a leading characteristic of Burke; and I should be losing a great moral of his career if I passed it over. You have often heard of his brilliant declamation and his inexhaustible fancy. You should never allow such phrases to make you forget that he was a more painstaking collector and methodizer of facts, that he understood statistics better, than any clerk. I do not put

this statement forward as if there was anything wonderful in it. I conceive it was most natural that the man who could see most significance and order in facts and figures, should apply himself to them most vigorously and cordially. The wonder is that those who have no human association with them, who do not see that they lead to anything or involve anything, should be able to treat them with any patience. Burke might well be diligent, for his diligence brought some reward with it—I mean the kind of reward such a man values most. It enabled him to be of some benefit to his fellow-creatures, and to see the path in which it behoved him to walk.

There were other rewards, often more coveted than these, which he did not despise, but which came to him more slowly. It was his friend Goldsmith who said about him—he was far too magnanimous to make any such complaint himself—

> "In short, 'twas his fate, unemploy'd or in place, sir,
> To eat mutton cold or cut blocks with a razor."

The "cold mutton" was, I doubt not, very endurable if he was really reduced to it; the "cutting blocks with a razor" points to another more curious, probably more painful experience. It is explained by the previous lines of the same poem, which describes Burke as an orator in the House of Commons:—

> ". . . . . He went on refining,
> And thought of convincing while they thought of dining."

How it came to pass that speeches which delight and instruct those to whom the topics treated in them are comparatively obsolete, should have acted as a dinner-bell to those to whom these topics were as full of the deepest interest as the Indian Mutiny is to us, has been a problem which many have undertaken to solve. Some of the solutions are certainly not satisfactory. He can scarcely have owed his unpopularity to any defects of voice or manner, for Mr. Fox's stammering and spluttering are notorious, and yet he was listened to with profound attention even by those who most disliked his sentiments. It cannot have been that Burke was regarded as an adventurer; for that evil name belonged with ten times greater right to Sheridan, who was applauded to the skies. Certainly it was not the dryness of his style, for he has a power such as I should think scarcely any speaker in any age or country ever possessed, of imparting animation to the dullest topics. Nor is Goldsmith's charge of "refining" to be taken in the sense which we sometimes give to the word. He does not draw hair-breadth distinctions, or widen his arguments till the purpose of them becomes invisible. He never amuses himself or the spectators with dancing on the tight-rope, or swallowing swords, or throwing up balls and catching them. He had too much business on hand, and was too much in earnest in doing it, to indulge in any mere feats of dexterity; but he did unquestionably refine, so far as to demand attention and thought from those who never refined. His sen-

tences were not of measured, even length, and did not terminate in some high-sounding phrase which satisfied the ear, and could be at once committed to memory for future use. He introduced whatever was necessary to the fulness of his statement, or to the elucidation of his argument, without considering whether it would serve the purpose of those who had already determined how they should vote, and who only wanted some palatable reasons which could make their consciences and their constituents understand why they had so determined. His very pains therefore to be intelligible procured him the fame of being puzzling and wearisome.

So many explanations and illustrations were needed to satisfy his own sense of the greatness of the subject, that those who had no sense of its greatness at all, who only wanted to dispose of it as quickly as they could, were of course irritated. It was very fortunate for him if they left him to a few friends and the Speaker. Oftentimes they expressed their dislike much more energetically; it was not fit that so troublesome a man should make himself audible at all—the scraping of their own feet was much more agreeable to them than his voice. Such facts should be recorded for the warning and the comfort of the times to come, and it should be remembered also that many who joined in scraping down the Irish adventurer who had come to disturb their peace, began before the end of his life to think that his words, whether understood or not, were the best protectors of them and their lands.

I need not say much of the second of the pamphlets to which I referred, which was an answer to one by Mr. George Grenville, though it is a valuable document for the history of the early part of the reign of George III., and though it shows how passing topics may be always made interesting to after-times, when they are connected with permanent principles. But I ought not to pass over another essay, also on an apparently temporary subject, which is named "Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontent." It was written in the year 1770, ten years after the accession of the Sovereign. It especially refers to the scheme of government which he was said to have adopted. He was supposed to bestow his confidence not on his responsible Ministers, but upon a set of persons called "King's friends," who belonged to no school or party, who had no political maxims whatever, who merely represented the private feelings of the Court, and selected, overthrew, and reconstructed administrations according to their pleasure. It was a strong conviction of the danger of this sort of government which led Burke to maintain the use and worth of recognized parties. The "Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontent" is the best apology for parties, I suppose, that was ever written. It should be read with the commentary which the life of the author supplies to it. With the strongest conviction that every man ought to belong to some party, with a clearer understanding than almost any man of the party to which it was his calling to attach himself, he neverthe-

less was the instrument at one time of bringing the most opposite parties into union; and at another of dividing that with which for years he had been associated. I am not going to enter into the right and wrong of either of these courses, but I think they show us very clearly, first, that this party is not so practical a thing as it seems to be, since the man who could justify it best in writing, was obliged to abandon it in fact; and secondly, that there must be some more sacred and divine obligation than this of party, otherwise the man who was most conscientiously, and with the most serious purpose, devoted to one, and who had most pursued principle in all his political arrangements, would scarcely have been the most remarkable instance on record, and that not once only but repeatedly, of one who breaks loose from those politics.

Perhaps the next subject which we encounter in looking through Burke's writings, may show us what obligations those were, to which all petty considerations about factions must, in a mind like his, have been subordinate. He is now engaged in questions about the relation of two worlds. All the knowledge which he had acquired respecting the English settlements in North America, whilst he was a mere literary workman, was now needed to illustrate the obligations which the mother country owed to the finest and most full-grown of her children; by what arts she might expect to receive back love and obedience from her offspring. I use this language because Burke never

regarded it as merely figurative language—never resorted to it merely to turn a period. The great value of all his speeches before and during the American War, is, I apprehend, this, that he treats relations between countries as if they were no less real than the relations between individuals, as if they too involved affections and duties which could not be stifled or neglected without injury to one side as well as the other.

His statesmanship therefore rises above petty maxims such as men resort to who think that suspicion is the great law of life, and that the more advantages you can take of your neighbour, the better it is for yourself. The highest policy is shown to be the most humane policy, the profoundest wisdom is the most trusting wisdom. You are sure to go wrong if you tie yourself by artificial rules, and ask whether this or that act falls within the letter of them, instead of considering what it is that we expect from others, and therefore what it is that we ought to give them. This application of maxims which we allow to be generous and wise in the intercourse between man and man, to the transactions between a nation and its colonies, strikes one at first as so simple, so obvious, that we scarcely venture to call a man a profound statesman who adopts it. And yet, may not these be the deepest politics, after all? May not the shallow politics be those which are made up of trick and diplomacy? May not they be always supplying new illustrations of the divine maxim, that "lying lips are but for a moment"? And may not the men who recur

to plain homely laws of honesty and justice be taking us to the very foundations of things, of the laws which God Himself has established for His world?

Burke was aware of all the complications of modern life, of all the excuses which those complications supply for a tortuous system of action. But he had arrived at a deliberate conviction from the study of history and the observation of his own time, that the more intricate all our relations to each other are, the more the evil deeds of us and of our fathers have perplexed them, the more wise and necessary it is not to confute them by fresh falsehoods, but to unravel them by letting in the light of a higher truth upon them. What I once heard a benevolent physician say of a madman, "Be sure you speak only the most direct truth to him; poor fellow, his mind is confused enough already with his own false impressions," is just the doctrine which Burke was preaching to the artificial world of the eighteenth century. We are embarrassed enough with the plots, and schemes, and petty arts we have dabbled in; we have tried that road long enough; let us see whether a little plain dealing may not serve us better. It was not, as I have said already, that he wanted to return to any imaginary age of gold; he believed in no such age. He did not wish to get rid of trade and commerce, that he might restore pastoral or agricultural simplicity; he accepted trade and commerce as gifts of God, the laws of which are to be carefully pondered. He believed that in one time just as much as another, in

one subject just as much as another, we are bound by laws which we did not make, which we cannot set aside, and that if we try to repeal them, and set up our own poor maxims in the place of them, they will avenge themselves upon us.

The morality which he had enforced in his speeches during the American War, he was called to exhibit in his own case in the year 1780, when he appeared before his constituents of the city of Bristol to explain his conduct to them, and to ask for a renewal of their confidence. They had chosen him first in the year 1774. At that time he had used language which I think it is not quite unfitting to read to you at this time. His colleague had expressed his wish to receive instructions from the electors as to his course of conduct, and his intention of conforming to them. Mr. Burke told them that he could do no such thing: "Certainly, gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him, their opinion high respect, their business unremitted attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasures, his satisfaction to theirs, and above all, ever and in all cases, to prefer their interests to his own. But his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure; no, nor from the

law and constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you not his industry only, but his judgment, and he betrays instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion. My worthy colleague says, his will ought to be subservient to yours. If that be all, the thing is innocent. If government were a matter of will upon any side, yours, without question, ought to be superior. But government and legislation are matters of reason and judgment, and not of inclination. And what sort of reason is that in which the determination precedes the discussion, in which one set of men deliberate and another decide, and where those who form the conclusion are perhaps three hundred miles distant from those who hear the arguments?

"To deliver an opinion is the right of all men; that of constituents is a weighty and respectable opinion, which a representative ought always to rejoice to hear, and which he ought always most seriously to consider. But *authoritative* instructions; *mandates* issued, which the member is bound blindly and implicitly to obey, to vote and to argue for, though contrary to the clearest conviction of his judgment and conscience: these are things utterly unknown to the laws of the land, and which arise from a fundamental mistake of the whole order and tenor of our constitution.

"Parliament is not a *congress* of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other

agents and advocates: but Parliament is a *deliberative* assembly of *one* nation, with *one* interest, that of the whole; where no local purposes and local prejudices ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You can choose a Member indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not a Member of Bristol, but a Member of *Parliament.* If the local constituent should have an interest or should form a hasty opinion, evidently opposite to the real good of the rest of the community, the Member for that place ought to be as far as any other from any endeavour to give it effect."

Well! he had given them this notice of the principle upon which he intended to act; but, as might have been expected, when he did act upon it they were offended. He had injured their trade, the merchants of Bristol thought, by his votes on the American War, and by supporting an Act for relieving debtors from the cruel imprisonment to which they were then subjected, and by some important measures connected with Ireland. He had offended their prejudices in other ways, and he had been too busy in his parliamentary work to pay them as many visits as they had supposed were due from a representative. Upon some of these points he had already explained himself in the course of the Session of Parliament in a Letter addressed to a Gentleman in Bristol, and to the Sheriff of Bristol,—letters which you will find in his works, and which are full of instruction. But he made his completest defence in a

speech delivered just before the election. That speech, I do think, was the bravest and the wisest ever addressed to an assembly of Englishmen. Would that our younger statesmen might read it again and again, till they have, in the true sense of the phrase, learnt it by heart! I must not indulge in extracts, for I should not know where to begin or where to end. I will read only these sentences: "I became unpopular in England for one of these acts, in Ireland for the other. What, then! What obligation lay on me to be popular? I was bound to serve both kingdoms; to be pleased with that service was their affair, not mine."

The citizens of Bristol were not pleased with this service; they dismissed him. He was returned, however, for another place to that Parliament. The measures of his friends prevailed in it. Lord North abandoned the Administration, the Marquis of Rockingham was again Prime Minister. Mr. Burke became Paymaster-General of the Forces. In that office he would have accomplished the scheme of economical reform which he had proclaimed in a speech he had delivered two years before. But Lord Rockingham died, and Lord Shelburne succeeded him. Mr. Burke believed that the old scheme of ruling by Court influence was about to be resumed by the connivance of this Minister. To counteract it he urged on, if he did not propose, a coalition between Mr. Fox and Lord North. This was one of the occasions to which I alluded on which Burke disturbed those party relations which he

deemed so important, and bore witness that they can at best be only means to an end. Whether he took the right way of accomplishing the end is another question; I said at the beginning of my lecture that I was far from thinking that he passed unhurt through the conflicts of factions. I hoped that we might learn from his biography what are the great and what are the little transactions in which public men are engaged; what are their own greatnesses and littlenesses. If we compare the events in which the Old and the New World are equally interested with these squabbles about Lord Shelburne, and Mr. Fox, and Lord North, how beggarly these last appear! If we compare Burke himself returning from Bristol in 1780, with Burke the organizer of a new party in 1783, how great he looks in the hour of defeat, how poor in the hour of success! It is no little satisfaction to remember that that hour of success did not last long. The Fox and North Ministry was broken up. Mr. Pitt became Premier, and Burke continued out of office for the rest of his life.

One great occupation of these later years he entered upon while he was connected with the Ministry. He had given his mind to the relation of England with her Colonies in the West. When she was separated from them, he devoted himself as vigorously to her relations with that mighty empire in the East which had been won by her soldiers and was ruled by her merchants. This subject has become to us one of such deep and awful interest, that I have scarcely courage to speak of

it merely as illustrating the life of an individual man. And one may rejoice that among the solemn and terrible associations which the name of India awakens in every one of us at this moment, we may quite forget all the bitter animosities and Court intrigues which gathered about the Bills of Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt; all that was merely personal in the prosecution of Warren Hastings. We may rejoice still more, though not without trembling, to believe that some of the allegations which we read in Burke's speeches about the British rule in India—allegations, it is to be feared, derived from only too accurate knowledge—some of his comparisons of the older government which had supplanted it, would have been retracted if he had had the experience of another seventy or eighty years. But the substantial part of these speeches remains, after all these deductions, a study and warning for the English statesman and the Englishman, which now less than ever he can afford to forget. It was the greatest honour and glory of Burke's life, that which raised his politics so far above the level of ordinary politics, that he was awake himself, that he did strive to awaken his countrymen, to a sense of the tremendous responsibility under which the possession of such an empire laid us; to a sense of the misery which we should bring upon ourselves and our institutions if we ever regarded races and nations as articles of merchandise. If there had not been some who took this measure of our duties when they first devolved upon us, could India have received any of the blessings

which we boast of having conferred upon her? If we had been generally aroused to the sense of our obligations, should we have needed a plague of fire and of blood to tell us that no one of us can any longer deny his share of the guilt or of the penalty?

I have left myself no time for speaking of the last eleven years of Burke's life, and of that series of his work which opens with his "Reflections upon the French Revolution." It is better that I should have done so, for there is comparatively little difference of opinion in this day about his conduct in the American War. There is a general disposition to acknowledge that he did good service ultimately, if not immediately, to India. But a thousand questions arise respecting his views of the events in France, which are mixed with all the controversies and heats of our own age. The little which I say upon this subject will be for the purpose of illustrating the character of the man, and for the further purpose, which I have kept before me throughout this lecture, of showing how we may profit by his wisdom, even if we have fallen upon times which require a higher guidance than that which he can give us, and if we have had some experience which may enable us to correct the conclusions which he deduced from his. It is notorious that his opinions respecting the French Revolution separated him from some of the friends to whom he had been most attached, especially from the one upon whom he had bestowed so splendid a panegyric in his speech on the Indian Bill. "Thus ended,"

(this is his own pathetic narrative of the separation, in the "Annual Register,") "thus ended a friendship which had lasted a quarter of a century. The House proceeded to the order of the day, and shortly afterwards adjourned." Though he wished to restore what he called the old Whig party, he did in fact prove the great render and confounder of parties. Nevertheless I think that anyone who observes that characteristic of his speeches respecting America which I have dwelt upon,—I mean his assertion that there are actual relations existing between nations and between all the orders in a particular nation, and that the whole happiness of society depends upon the acknowledgment of these relations and upon the fulfilment of the mutual duties which they involve,—will not wonder or think him inconsistent if he complained of a Revolution which seemed to him to set aside all relations, to reduce society into its original elements, and to rebuild it upon the assertion of individual rights, not of obligations. It seems to me that in protesting against the voluntary adoption of such a system, he was doing a great service to every country, most of all to the toiling and suffering people of every country. He was asserting a principle which they can the least afford to part with; since every wrong that has been done to them has arisen from the forgetfulness of it. He was right, I think, to say that our English Constitution is precious, because it asserts the obligations and responsibilities of the different portions of society to

each other, and that it never can be expanded or improved by setting up any maxim which makes one class or another suppose that it has a power which can break through them. Where he seems to me to have failed, is in not sufficiently recognizing the width and the depth of these assertions. If it is true that society is constituted of these mutual relations and obligations, then we must look upon every dissolution of society as a divine sentence and judgment upon the indifference or contempt of them. The agents may have worked blindly, often madly. Their blindness and their madness were themselves parts of the sin for which the Judge of all was calling those who had the means of opening their eyes and making them sane, to give account. The sufferings which they produced may well make us tender and charitable to the sufferers. But they must not tempt us, as I think they did very naturally tempt Burke, to overlook the enormous corruptions and the frightful heartlessness which could have no other catastrophe than this, and which, if they had been allowed to fester undisturbed, would have been immeasurably more fatal than any such catastrophe. Nor can I help feeling very strongly that Burke, because he did not judge the sins of the passing age with sufficient severity, looked upon the coming age with far too little hope. He took, it seems to me, a truer measure of the greatness of the events in which he was moving than any of the men about him of either school. He saw that the results of these events could not be calculated by

the horoscopes of ordinary politicians. He felt that it was an utter mistake to apply phrases that were borrowed from old classical times or from English history to the French movement. He saw that that was not what is called a constitutional movement in any sense of that word; that it was not an attempt to recover any of the old traditions or principles of French society; that it was a violent defiance of them all. He did not see that it might be an effort to assert that there is an order for human beings, a fellowship for men simply as men, which constitutional maxims are by their very nature too limited, too national, to uphold. He did not see that there was no necessary contradiction between such a human, such a universal fellowship, and those national institutions of which no one understood the worth so well as himself. He did not see that through tremendous conflicts, through efforts at a universal anarchy or at a universal despotism, God might design to show us at last what the true human society is, and how all particular societies may attain their own highest growth and fruitfulness in the light of it. Because with all his gift of prophesying evils which were certainly to come, he could not perceive this good which might be lying behind them, he was not always able, I think, to understand even that past history which he had explored so diligently. With all his honesty and nobleness he could not quite think that the preservation of the order of the world was not in some degree owing to the tricks and contrivances of

statesmen, even though he had continual and painful experience how much they were contributing to increase its disorders. He could not do justice to the piety of the men of our Revolution whom he admired most, a piety which rose above their own narrow conceptions as well as the poor theories of their opponents. He could not think that they entirely meant what they said, that God put down those who had broken their obligations to Him. He thought it was a seemly and beautiful phrase, not the utterance of an everlasting truth. I believe that these times, at the coming of which he trembled with a natural and reasonable fear, —with the fear of a man who understood that they were to be most awful, who did not understand that the more awful they were the more they bore witness of the guidance of Him in whom all awe dwells,—were to teach us that no seemly phrases which mean nothing, can stand the shock of a mighty crisis; but that such a crisis may bring to light that which lay hidden and half-dead beneath them, may bring us face to face with realities to which they pointed. I believe that all history has become more grave, and terrible, and full of significance, since that time, because the present has become more grave and terrible also; but that if we have faith to look upon both, to see in each the interpretation of the other, we shall not shrink from the thought of the future, because it must compel us to meet the whole problem of human society, because it must compel us to seek for a divine solution of that problem.

Burke died in the year 1797; he belongs emphatically to the last age. He left no successor, as he once dreamt that he might, who should maintain his principles and support his name in the coming age. He died childless. It was the loss of his son, on whom he had looked with an affection which belonged to his character, with an exaggerated admiration which was a most pardonable exercise of his fancy, which struck the final blow to his spirit as well as to his body. There is no decline of intellectual power in his later works. His eloquence perhaps reaches its highest point in them; but there is the irritation and despondency which I have endeavoured to account for. There is the lesson to us, that each man has his appointed work to do, that more than that work he cannot do; that if he does it as ever in his great Taskmaster's eye, the times to come may bless his memory and give thanks for his wisdom; but that we are not to expect from men past, present, or coming, that which we may look for and shall find in Him who is, and was, and is to come.

XII.

ACQUISITION AND ILLUMINATION.[1]

I HAVE been reflecting upon some phrases which most of us adopt almost without knowing that we adopt them, and which, it seems to me, have done no little harm to our studies. We are apt to draw our language respecting *knowledge* from that which of right belongs to property. We talk of *transmitting* knowledge as we talk of *transmitting* lands from father to son. We talk of *acquiring* knowledge as we talk of *acquiring* money. Perhaps it scarcely occurs to you—it often does not occur to me—that these are metaphorical or artificial expressions. They have become so worked into our speech that we suppose they are just as applicable to learning as they are to houses or to the funds. And I am far from denying that they have a good sense. I should be very sorry to banish them altogether. There is a most important principle involved in the doctrine that a father may leave intellectual treasures to his

[1] Part of a New Year's Address to the Pupils of some of the Classes at the Working Men's College. 1863.

sons as well as material treasures. There is an important truth in the saying, that knowledge, like bread, is to be acquired by the sweat of the brow. I would keep up the recollection of these facts by occasionally using these familiar expressions, because, if we destroy the connection between knowledge and property, we shall make property and all that has to do with it more sordid and base. I would say to the rich man, "There is *something* in this language which is worth your remembering." But I would say to him also, "There is a better and nobler language than this; one which tells us what it cannot tell us. The poor man, if you will listen to him, will teach you that language." What is that language? A man goes out to his work, say at six or seven on a January morning; the same miracle occurs every twenty-four hours. The streets are dark, only made more dismal by a few gas lamps which are gradually put out. The sun appears; there is a light upon his path; the light is upon all the houses and shops amidst which he is walking. The light may not be mixed with much warmth on these wintry days; but he knows there is warmth as well as light there for him, and for all who are out in these streets; for all England, for countries utterly unlike England. Light has been associated with knowledge—has been the symbol of the way in which men come to know, in all regions and in all ages. Is it not the natural, the true symbol? If we take those that are derived from property in change for it, do not you think we shall suffer

greatly? For see what the difference is! If knowledge comes to us as light comes to us, it can never be third-hand or second-hand knowledge. The sun is very, very old; but he is new to me every time I welcome him. He is still the bridegroom fresh from his chamber. He is not the least worn or tarnished because my ancestors of the generations of old rejoiced at the sight of him. And again, it does not the least interfere with the illumination which I receive from him, that tens of thousands of others are illuminated by him at the same instant. I have, no doubt, acquired the illumination—if you mean I am the better for it. I have not acquired it the least, if you mean that I can claim it as mine to the injury or exclusion of any other creature. And as to imparting or diffusing it, what I can do in that way is to invite all I know to leave their close houses and enjoy it with me; or to let it into their houses when that is possible. If I take any other course than that, I shall not diffuse light, but perhaps darkness.

You may think me perverse for insisting so strongly upon the distinction between these two forms of expression, each of which I allow, within due limits, to be reasonable. But I cannot tell you how much I think is involved in it. I believe that your tasks in each one of your class-rooms will be fruitful or barren in proportion as you remember or forget it. I will go with you from one to the other that you may see whether experience confirms or refutes mine.

I cannot begin better than with your Drawing-classes. Those who have studied in those classes have a great excuse for using the words with which I appear to be finding fault. They do, I am satisfied, *acquire* a great power of using their hands, and directing their pencils. They acquire a faculty of observing which they had not before they came here. No one has less right than I have to dispute that these are peculiar gifts, since I can put a singularly little claim to either. And it is equally true that these gifts are not new powers. Men, in other days, have had them. Hints have been left for the exercise of them, which may warrant us in saying that they have been *transmitted* to us. All this is true. And yet when I go into your rooms, it is not for these I envy you; it is that those leaves which you are copying have actually discovered to you their cunning workmanship, their secret beauty. It is that human faces have told you a little of the wonder that is in them. I rejoice that you can express with your pencils something of what they have said to you; that you can help us to understand them a little. A light has burst upon you which shows you those forms and colours with which you have been familiar so long. The old things have not changed their own nature, but they have become new to you. You like them all the better because they are the same that you have had with you since you were children. You may indeed have a desire kindled in you to see the places of which you have only heard. In the midst of close streets you

may dream of mountains and lakes, and wish to come in contact with them, that they may be facts, not dreams, in your minds. It is well to have your horizon so enlarged; but it is better still that within that horizon, so many things start into life which were almost dead. In each case you have found how truly knowledge is an unveiling of that which is, and of that which is common. If you have been at ever so much pains in seeking it, when it has come you have said, "There it is! Something that was hidden has shown itself to me. More that is hidden will show itself to me. My eye may be feeble, but it can take in marvellous things. If I am permitted to make any likeness of them, how faint it must be! Yet what a blessing that there is this way of leading others to share my perceptions, to enter into my joy!"

I speak with the greater pleasure and confidence of this subject, notwithstanding my ignorance of it, because this has been the kind of feeling which your art-teachers have especially laboured to cultivate in you. Whether they have directed you to the human figure or to trees and flowers—whatever methods they may have deemed the best—the object of them all, if I understand them right, has been that you should see things as they are. They have no notion that you, or that they, can improve the works of God. They are not content that you should merely carry away, or represent, certain vague impressions of yours about those works. Whatever object, small or great, you copy, they would have you

try to get a glimpse of what that object means. The object, and not your acquirements, is what they would have you exhibit; therefore they supply me with the best illustrations I could find of the doctrine which I am enforcing to-night.

My next shall be taken from one of our studies which I have, if possible, a still greater interest in describing as a peculiar treasure, which only a few can be expected by great diligence or luck to obtain. I speak of that one which for a while you neglected as too noisy for your other occupations, but which the zeal and science of one of your best friends has at last naturalized among you. He recommended to you the method of instruction which has been adopted, on the ground of its universality. Its merit in his eyes was, that it was for the many, not for the few. Do you think that in saying so he degraded the art, for the honour of which he must be especially jealous? He seemed to me to be showing his deep reverence for it, to be asserting claims on its behalf which those who boast of it as their own and refuse it to the people are denying. If Music thus becomes a common language, it must have all the glory which those who have loved it best and understood it most have felt to be in it. It must be deeper than our ordinary speech. However many may be the different forms which it has put on among different races, suitable to the tempers and habits of those races, it cannot be limited by these; it must be the sign that all are alike men; it must be the attempt—if as yet only an

imperfect attempt—to express that which is human, that which binds us together. I am sure there must be such an expression as this is; I am sure of it all the more, when I feel how little it is an articulate expression for me; when I am most compelled to say that I have only the faintest dream of its signification.

And therefore I am sure that all musical teaching must be a discovery; that it should make known to the humblest man relations between him and his fellows. I cannot disbelieve, though I may be utterly unable to comprehend, anything which musicians have told us of the inner harmonies of which they have been made conscious. The beautiful sympathies, the clear pure lives, of such men as Felix Mendelssohn, of such women as Mrs. Goldschmidt, should awaken in us much more than an admiration of them, though that may be most cordial. We should hail them as witnesses, that those who have most of what is called musical acquirement are those who most regard it as a bond to all their suffering brothers and sisters. We should assure ourselves that every divine gift to individuals is precious only as it unites them more with their kind.

The transition from this elevated form of human speech to the languages of particular countries is a very easy one; for you can scarcely begin to study any language without finding yourself listening to some of the songs that have been sung in it. Almost every language has been cradled in song if it has not been born in song. When people have learnt to utter more than mere

animal cravings—when they have felt that they had fellowship with each other, music has somehow joined itself to words; they have come forth together. Why do I use such a vague, awkward phrase as "somehow?" Because I cannot tell you the *how*, and I do not know that anyone can. The more one considers the origin of speech, the more profoundly mysterious it seems. The greatest philologers do not clear away the mystery; the greater they are, the more they make you aware of it. They lead you further and further into the heart of it; they try to make you perceive what relation each language has to every other; they convince you that there must be some fellowship between them all; some centre to which they all turn. As they trace the growth of each distinct stock or stem, you feel, as Mr. Max Müller said in his lectures at the Royal Institution, that you are studying facts which correspond to the facts of nature; though they concern men so nearly, you cannot resolve them into contrivances or arrangements of human skill; you can never find the place where or the time when certain men met and agreed to call things by certain names. Words grow out of certain roots as much as trees grow; their different meanings expand themselves as the leaves of a tree expand themselves. We have not to do here with the general conclusions of men who have given their study to the Science of Language as such. You go to particular classes for the study of French, or Latin, or German, or English. It is far better to do so. Our

great philologists would urge you to do so; for they have arrived at universal principles through the special facts which have been discovered to them in the examination of one or another language, and in comparing two or more together. And I think these great men would say to you, "Do not fancy that you can *acquire* a language—any language whatever. It is too big a thing for any man to acquire." *You* certainly will have no leisure to do that. But if the language has been spoken by men such as you are—by your fellow-creatures—it may show you truths which you did not know before; truths concerning those men, truths concerning yourselves. A light flashes out of a word sometimes which frightens one. If it is a common word of our own tongue, one wonders how one has dared to use it so frequently and so carelessly, when there were such meanings hidden in it; such beautiful treasures—or such dangerous materials as might explode, and scatter mischief all around. If it is a word of another tongue, one is struck with its likeness to some word that occurs in our every-day intercourse. Whence arises the resemblance? How can we trace it? If we can trace it a good way, each new link suggests a fresh wonder; a multitude of other words and other meanings we find are either of the same family originally, or have been married into it. Then comes the question—How did these words meet together? How do they shape themselves into a sentence? Certainly there seems no hazard in it. They must follow each other in a certain

order; they must behave themselves to each other with a certain decency and respect. It is very strange, this grammar. I find it wherever I go. German, French, Latin, English, they have all got it. Differences, great differences, there are between them; but yet how much in common! How much must be in each which is also in the other! At first there seems something baffling, almost overwhelming, in such reflections.

A mere acquirer, indeed, is not struck by them at all. If you speak of them to him, he says—which is very true—that you are merely uttering commonplaces. But commonplaces are more worthy to be thought of than rarities. The secrets of our life lie hid in them. Never, therefore, slight them. These which concern the derivation of words, and their connection in sentences, never grow old. There may be a number of new theories about them, but the facts are richer and wider than the theories; the theories are chiefly good because they bring facts to light which have been overlooked. Into whatever language class you go, facts will present themselves to you which will make your ordinary speech a much more sacred speech to you. Those who are in the Latin class will find what close links there are between the London citizen of 1863, and the Roman in the time of Julius Cæsar; how much their speech and thoughts have affected ours. Those in the German class will find themselves still nearer the roots of that speech and those thoughts; while yet they will find that there must be deeper roots beneath. The French

teacher will show you how many affinities and how many differences there are between the exquisite instrument for intercourse which he possesses, and the one which we use; everywhere you will be reminded of home by what you see abroad. And if you stay at home and keep to the English Language Class, you will have a number of discoveries made to you, which will show you what myriads more are still to be made.

A pedant, whose character is admirably drawn in a drama with which your German teacher will have made some of you acquainted, exclaims, as he leaves his sorrowful and discontented teacher, who thinks he has been merely stuffing himself with words, "Now know I much, yet hope I to know much more." That is the proper natural tone of the *acquirer*. "A light has reached me which has shown me a little of my own ignorance—a little of the wonderful nature which God has given me. Let me have more light, that I may perceive how much less I know than I seem to know." In that form the thankfulness and the desires of the true learner express themselves.

I ought not to leave the subject of Words without alluding to another subject which has been set before some of you in these class-rooms. *Logic* is derived from the Greek name for "word." Its etymology may easily mislead us, yet no one who is entering upon the study ought to forget it. Only a creature who uses words has anything to do with logic. Shakespeare speaks of mere animals as "wanting discourse of reason." That is to

say, they do not connect thoughts together; they have not the power of communicating thoughts to each other. That, he regards as the prerogative of a man. Now everyone who exercises this prerogative is, whether he is aware of it or not, a logician. He conforms to certain rules; he follows a certain order in his discourse; otherwise he would not be understood; he would convey no sense to the man he conversed with. To find out what these rules are—to learn this order—is the work of the student of logic. To help him in this task, to show him what perceptions one or another man has had of these rules and this order; that is the work of the teacher. You see that here, as elsewhere, we are engaged about that which is common to human beings; we are learning, not what some may do and others not, but what must be true about us all.

The man who knows all the rules and maxims of Logic is not the least above the rest of his species; he has only begun to understand a little of that which connects him with his species. And if he loses sight of that fact—if he fancies he has got hold of a great art or trick which gives him an advantage over other men, I don't hesitate to say that he falls below them. He becomes more foolish than other men, for his feet may become entangled in his own nets; he may spin endless webs about himself which he cannot break through. He becomes more wicked than other men, for he may use his craft to perplex them; to make the worse appear the better reason. Ultimately I think the folly and the wickedness meet.

The wise man is taken in his own craftiness; he is found to be a self-deceiver as well as a deceiver of others. Logic has often got a bad name from both these causes. It has been suspected of being mere child's play. It has been suspected of being a scheme for imposing upon plain men. If it is looked upon as a mere acquirement, it may be either. If it is looked upon as a discovery of laws which we are all meant to obey, it may often save us from wasting our time in child's play, it may be a protection against many impostures.

This remark leads me to studies which have been more pursued here than logic has ever been; as, for my own part, I should wish them to be. They are included in the general name Mathematics—a very beautiful and instructive name, seeing that it is derived from the word for learning, and that it indicates the position of those who are seeking Science to be always in the position of learners. It is that which has made geometry a keen delight to a number of earnest and faithful men. They have felt that they were learning step by step some of the laws of the earth upon which they were moving; some principles which, being ascertained as true in one case, are true in all cases. Arithmetic, in like manner, has had a great charm for them, as they have learnt that the numbers with which they were dealing in the most ordinary calculations were not mere instruments or devices for calculations; that they are contrived on profound principles; that men in all times and places find them, and do not make

them. If these studies are treated as acquirements, men may become self-exalted—and stupefied also—by their acquaintance with forms and with numbers. They may lose their relish for their study of the facts of nature, because they cannot reduce them under their measures, or confine them by their lines. They may be incapable of examining the deeds of men; may complain that men are so troublesome, and do such a number of acts which they cannot account for, that if they would only cease to be free and to think, something might be made of them. But the true mathematician—that is, the true learner—has had his mind opened and prepared to receive the teachings which come to him from every part of the universe. He will not demand of the botanist that flowers should not grow, or of the geologist that he should find no changes in the structure of the earth, or of the physiologist that he should not investigate all the signs of life in the human body, all its varieties of disease; he will listen to all they tell him, and like them all the better for the mysteries which he cannot fathom; only believing that there is an order and harmony in them all, and expecting that their order and harmony will one day be made manifest.

That is the spirit in which I trust you will frequent any of those classes which deal with natural science, or, as we sometimes call it, physical science, the science of those things which are born, and which grow. If you come to acquire any of these sciences, you will

sometimes be puffed up with a vain assurance which will hinder you from receiving any fresh instruction from them, any correction of the errors into which you have fallen; you will sometimes be accepting every fresh notion as if that must be true, casting away every one you have held hitherto as if that must be false; you will sometimes fall into utter despair and think that nothing can be ascertained. If you go on desiring light—though it may come slowly, though it may come through much darkness—I am satisfied it will come. You will be ready for the entrance of fresh light—you prize dearly that which has been granted you; the sense of your ignorance will be always deepening, and with it the security of your knowledge.

I say this confidently about these sciences, though I am very unfit to speak of them; for the experience of those who have profited most in them goes with me; they will support me and not contradict me. I say it with equal confidence about studies into which I have entered in a very slight degree—those which we sometimes suppose are made entirely loose and irregular by human passions, human taste, and human will. The mathematician and the natural philosopher are often contrasted with the poet and the man of letters. The contrast, I am sure, need not exist, and ought not to exist. The English University which is most devoted to Mathematics has been the most fertile in poets; some of the most eminent of our literary men in this day are intensely attached to physical science. Where

the opposition between them exists, it arises, I think, from the cause which I have pointed out in this lecture. Some men try to acquire a great many notions about poetical and prose compositions. They try to practise, perhaps, a little in that way themselves. They magnify their own craft at the expense of every other; they scorn what they call the dryness of mathematics—the cold treatment of Nature and its beauties by the man of Science. It is not so with those who come to the poet, or to the novel writer, for instruction. They find that either of them is good so far as he enables them to see more into the meaning and order of Nature, or of their own lives; to understand better what relations exist between them and their fellow-creatures. They do not care for either if his diction is ever so fine, if he exhibits ever so many of what the wise in such matters tell them are the proper characteristics of poetical or prose fiction, provided he fails to impart this light. In plain words, they do not care for fiction. They like Mr. Tennyson, they like Mr. Kingsley, just as they like Mr. Faraday or Mr. Huxley, for telling them truth, not for telling them lies. And so the study of what we call works of fiction becomes naturally connected with the study of History. The books of an age explain the events of an age; the events of an age help us to understand what was special in the writers of its books. Those who bid us acquire a knowledge of English history are greatly divided about the nature of that knowledge, and the way we are to seek for it. Some of them

point out the importance of mastering facts, and ascertaining when and where they occurred; some say that the facts are in themselves worthless, but that they may help us in arriving at some general notions or propositions, which may be useful in judging our fellow-creatures, and in guiding our own conduct. I cannot tell you how much disputing there has been about these two methods, and how much time that might be spent in learning we may waste in considering which of them is the right one. Those who support the first course call the champions of the other very hard names. "They put"—so their revilers affirm—"certain fine speculations of their own in place of what has actually been done, and call it philosophy." These answer by calling the reporters of fact, dry, jejune creatures, who cannot discriminate between that which is precious and that which is insignificant, but count anything which comes to their net good if they only label it *a fact*. I do not like any of these railings, or wish to take part in them; though I cannot deny that both have much plausibility. And so I am driven back in this case as in all the rest, upon my old doctrine. I have no hope of acquiring a knowledge of even a small portion of the smallest history. But I feel that I want the light which history gives me, that I cannot do without it. I find that I am connected, in my own individual life, with a past and a future as well as a present. I cannot make out either without the other. I find that I am connected with a nation which has had a past as well as a present, and which must

have a future. I am confident that our life is meant to be a whole; that its days, as the poet says, should be linked each to each in natural piety. They fall to pieces very easily; it is hard, often it seems impossible, to recover the links between them. But there comes an illumination to us ever and anon over our past years, and over the persons gone out of our sight who worked in them. Places we have visited with them, help to bring them back; to recollect the year and the month and the day is of great use, for so the events and the persons are seen, not confusedly, but clearly, standing as they actually stood. Thus it is with the ages gone by. Every one of them is telling upon us; every man who has thought and worked in them has contributed to the good or evil which is about us. The ages are not dead; they cannot be. If we listen, they will speak to us.

Times and places will be great helps in understanding their voice, as in understanding the voices that come to us from our own boyhood and childhood. The death of a king may make a crisis in the progress of a nation, as the death of a personal friend makes a crisis in our own lives. An old town-hall, or the relics that tell of a battle which has once been fought, may be like some house or room that reminds us of those from whose lips we have learnt, or of some struggle that we have had to pass through. The times and places will not in themselves be the precious things; but that which was done in them, those who dwelt in them. We shall

care more for the things than for any propositions which we make about them; for our propositions may be very good or wise, but they are limited by the minds that form them. A truth is full and living, and contains a thousand different lessons, one of which may commend itself to one man, one to another, according to his deeds. Each of us may help the other to find the lessons which he wants; but we must not put ourselves between him and the truth whence all the lessons proceed.

I have one more subject to speak of. In that German play to which I have referred already, the hero laments that he has studied Jurisprudence, Medicine, and all other arts, and alas! also THEOLOGY, and that he is just as wise as he was before. I doubt not that a man who seeks to *acquire* Jurisprudence, Medicine, or any art, will some day be obliged to utter that complaint. I am sure that the "alas!" of Dr. Faustus will proceed from the soul of the theological student who has laboured with that aim. His pursuit must seem utterly bewildering, an utter self-contradiction. He must feel that he has been making continual efforts to attain the unattainable, to grasp the infinite. He must regard his study either as standing aloof from all other, condemning them all, or as a chain which is to bind them all.

Just because I believe what I have been saying to you this evening respecting other studies, I hold that this one condemns none of them, but justifies them all—is meant not to bind any, but to break its chains. When

Columbus first caught sight of the land which was the reward of years of toil and disappointment, we called him the discoverer of America. He would have said that America discovered itself to him, or that God discovered it to him. A veil was withdrawn, a world that Europe was intended to know became known; it was his high honour to say, "There it is; every one of those poor sailors shares the discovery with me. To each person who sees that Continent hereafter, it will discover itself as it now does to us." That, I understand, is the fundamental maxim of theology. We cannot discover the Eternal and Infinite, but He discovers Himself, and in discovering Himself helps us to see what we are, what our relations to our fellow-creatures are, what we are to seek, what we are to hate. Because I am convinced that this is so—because I should despair of myself and you, and of the universe, if I thought otherwise—therefore I can see a meaning, a worth, a sacredness, a hopefulness in every pursuit to which you devote yourselves here or elsewhere; therefore I can trust every New Year will do more for you than the last. The assurance of a Revelation that has been made, of a Revelation that is to be made to the whole earth; this I find the chief comfort and encouragement in thinking of your work, or of my work, of your little society, or of the whole society of human beings.

III.

ON CRITICS.[1]

In the year 1801 a periodical was established in Edinburgh which has exercised a considerable influence upon the thought and the criticism of this country during the last half-century. Those who commenced this work took for their motto the words, "The judge is condemned when the guilty man is absolved or escapes condemnation." They therefore proclaimed themselves judges; their function was to decide what writers were deserving of punishment; on those who did, they pledged themselves to inflict it summarily.

It is said, that of the persons who felt themselves called to this office, and who formed this determination, scarcely one had passed his twenty-first birthday. That may appear an early time for men to take their seats upon the bench; yet many of us can recollect that at that age, though we might have few or none of the gifts which these Edinburgh Reviewers gave ample evidence

[1] A Lecture delivered at the Brighton Athenæum, 1856.

that they possessed, we thought ourselves perfectly competent to assume the same position and to pass sentence upon the universe. If we did not think so then, we probably should never have arrived at the belief afterwards; for as we grow older painful doubts of our infallibility spring up within ourselves, and are encouraged by the persons with whom we converse. It now and then occurs to us that perhaps the judge is condemned for his severity as well as for his leniency, and that he may sometimes mistake an innocent man for a guilty one. Nay, the judge may even feel that his own office, grand as it is, does not quite satisfy his human cravings. He may wish for a little sympathy with his fellow-creatures; he may dream that he would be more comfortable if he were more on their level, if he stood at least on a not quite immeasurable height above them. He would like not always to be laying down the law, and to be occasionally receiving wisdom as well as giving it forth. Such desires and regrets begin to be awakened in us about that time when, as Young says, a man suspects himself a fool,—they have ripened considerably by that maturer time, when, according to the same authority, he knows it. One who was in his youth a severe, though certainly on the whole a genial critic, has said:—

"A something whispers in my heart
That as we downward tend,
Lycoris, life requires an *art*,
To which our souls must bend;

A skill, to balance and supply;
And ere the flowing fount be dry,
As soon it must, a sense to sip
And drink, with no fastidious lip."

But although great weight is due to this experience, it is also true that we may learn more of the tendencies of an age from young men than we can from old men. These accomplished Edinburgh Reviewers, and other reviewers much less accomplished, would not have aspired to such great tasks when they were young, and would not have produced so much effect, and excited so much rivalry, if there had not been a bias in our time towards criticism which there never was to the same degree in any former time, and which it is not possible—and therefore, if we admit a Providence over the minds of men, which it is not desirable—to counteract. Shakespeare has put into the mouth of his worst character the words, "I am nothing if not critical." I believe it may be true of the very best men of our time that they are nothing if not critical. But then I apprehend that they have taken some pains with themselves that their criticism shall not be of the same kind with Iago's—that it shall not be cold, suspicious, hateful, quickly detecting all that is evil in things or in men, very slow in discovering the good because there is no wish to discover it. I think they must be aware how easily they may slide into that Iago temper, and must have sought help in cultivating that which is the direct contrary of it. In

what I say to you this evening about critics, my object will be to point out, so far as I am able, how we may become critics of the one sort, or of the other. It is far enough from my intention to say *who* are of the one sort or of the other. I speak of errors which I know in myself, much more than any I know of in my neighbours. I believe the capacities for both characters lie in each of us, and that it is almost certain that we shall all of us sink into the one if we do not rise into the other.

The word "critic" unquestionably means a judge. The motto of the Edinburgh Reviewers gives it its literal force. But if you have been at a criminal trial in English courts of justice, and have marked the demeanour of the wisest and most righteous of the men who preside in them, I think you will have observed that the task of pronouncing sentence, even the task of laying down the law for the guidance of the jury, is not the greatest or the most difficult which they perform. In our days, at least—I do not know how it may have been in the more hanging days of our fathers—the black cap is not regarded by the spectators, certainly not by him who puts it on, as the most worthy or distinctive ensign of his office. Sadly and reluctantly he resorts to it at last. Not till he has exercised all his higher faculties in discriminating between conflicting points of evidence; not till after the most patient toil in severing facts from guesses, truth from appearances—after the most scrupulous allowance for unfairness in

narrators, and for reasons why the act should not have been committed—he has been driven to the conclusion that it has been committed, and that the doer of it is before him. Even then, by the provisions of our law, he cannot, as you know, take the decision into his own hands. He can only use the light that has been given him to direct the minds of the twelve men who are to try the case; he is at best their mouth-piece. This distinction of duties is represented, I think, by the two names for a judge in the language from which we have borrowed the word "critic." Mr. Grote, in his "History of Greece," uses very often the word "dicast." That describes accurately the work which the judge has to perform at last; but his criticism has been exercised before. If I am right in these remarks, a critic upon any subject whatever—whether he speaks of books, or art, or men—is not to think first or chiefly what judgments he may pass upon that which he is occupied with. He may be a long time before he finds himself able to pass a judgment. Perhaps he may be less able and less willing to do it after a long consideration than he was at the first moment. But he may be cultivating his judgment; he may be acquiring a habit of discernment which he certainly had not at first, and which he will find much more valuable to him for his own sake, and for all the business of life, than the power of laying down the law respecting books, or art, or men, supposing he could have the largest circle to listen to his decrees and to accept them, supposing he had the power

of enforcing punishments for the transgression of his laws, supposing he could cause the largest number of men to smart under the rod, or to suffer capitally under the axe. I will try to illustrate what I have been saying in a few particular cases. I will begin with books. I fancy there is nothing we more like to exercise our criticism upon than on the *style* of the books that come in our way. I am thinking now chiefly of books in prose; of poetry I may speak a little by and by. Such a style we pronounce is an affected style, or an un-English style, or an unintelligible style, or a pompous style, or a too colloquial style, or a style that departs from all good models, or a style that is a mere imitation of certain models. Some one of these phrases is applied to a particular writer, first, perhaps, by some oracle in a drawing-room circle, or it may have come forth with the anonymous weight of some newspaper. It gets quickly into circulation. Then some one rises up in defence of the writer. He likes the affected, or the un-English, or the irregular, or the imitated style; perhaps he adopts it and exaggerates it. He, too, has his set of followers. There are some who listen to his decrees; perhaps he can get them into print. Thus a great amount of criticism is abroad; a number of judges are condemning the guilty man, trembling lest they should be condemned if he is absolved. But, after all, what has been gained? What real critical faculty has one of these judges been exercising? Those epithets which they have bestowed upon the style do not

tell you in the least what an English style, or a correct style, or a true style, is. That secret is hid in the heart of the commentator. He may hold up a few sentences to ridicule, with a "Look there! how bad that is! What nonsense this is!" He may even hint what he thinks is the proper model for all people to follow; but by saying that he does not the least help us to avoid these faults, if they are faults, or to follow the right leader, if he is a right one. He leaves the impression upon our minds that he is a standard of taste, and that he knows that he is. It is a comfortable conviction certainly, as long as he can retain it; but I cannot see that mankind is in any degree improved by his possession of a quality which it seems that he is utterly unable to impart.

Is there, then, to be no criticism of style? Is there no such thing as style? Do we mean nothing when we say that the style of Milton is altogether different from the style of Burke? I apprehend that we do mean very much; just as much as when we say that the handwriting of two men is different, or their walk, or their voice, or their manners in a room. All these are real differences; some of them, if not all of them, are helps to tell us wherein the men differ from each other, what is the characteristic peculiarity of each. And that is the good which one gets from the style of a book. If it is not the expression of what a man is, it is absolutely worthless, with whatever rules it may be in conformity; if it is,

it is one means of getting acquainted with him. It will not tell you all you want to know of him, but it will tell you something. It may show you, no doubt, his weakness as well as his strength; it may explain to you what he cannot do as well as what he can. But, at all events, let us try to know what it does say before we proceed to classify it, or to pass sentence upon it. It is wonderful how much our faculties of discernment will grow, and unfold themselves, if we begin by throwing all our notions about style overboard, and simply come to be taught why this author spoke in this way and that in another, why this was significant of him and of the time in which he lived, and another belonged to a person who lived in a different time and who had another work. The process may be a slow one—we may make no sensible advance in it, we may not be able to set down the results to our own satisfaction; but then see how much more interesting the process itself is than that for which we exchange it. When I am setting myself up as a judge of authors for the purpose of condemning the guilty, I shall look out for those who are likely to give me most occupation by their absurdities. I shall consider that my business is with the bad, though I may chance now and then to light upon something good. What effect must this continual familiarity with what is mean and vulgar, have upon my own mind? Suppose I continue to denounce it, suppose I continue to find a delight in denouncing it, must I not insensibly acquire its likeness,

or else become intolerably conceited because I am above it? But in the other case, I must look out for the best and ablest writers, because they are the best worth hearing, and because I want their styles only to manifest *them*. I must mix constantly with those who will make me ashamed, not proud of myself. And I shall at last get more than I sought for. The great man is the man who most reflects the temper and spirit of his time. Though he will write differently from his contemporaries, you may discover from him what those contemporaries were, what they were thinking, feeling, suffering. I should like to give you specimens of what I mean from the two authors whom I named casually just now. There are no two styles in our language perhaps more unlike each other than the style of John Milton and the style of Edmund Burke. I will not attempt to express the difference in words. You cannot read any paragraph of the one, or of the other, without feeling it. And I do not think you can read any paragraph of one or of the other, whether you agree with it or not—whether it strikes at some cherished opinion of yours or supports one—without feeling that it is the genuine, noble, natural expression of the mind of a genuine and noble man; without feeling that they could not be changed for one another, or blended together, but at the peril of both becoming false; without feeling that the one belongs to the England of the seventeenth century, and the other to the England of the eighteenth; without learning how different those two periods were

without feeling that the nation in both was the same nation. Let me read you a passage from Milton's "Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing," and then one from Burke's "Speech to the Electors of Bristol," then I think that you will understand how much the style of an author may teach us respecting him, and respecting ourselves, if we do not apply to it our narrow measures and tie it down by our petty rules of art:—

"I deny not but that it is of greatest concern in the Church and Commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how Bookes demeane themselves, as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors. For Bookes are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of Life in them to be as active as that soule whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons' teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet on the other hand unless warinesse be used, as good almost kill a Man, as kill a good Booke: who kills a Man, kills a reasonable creature, God's Image; but hee who destroyes a good booke, kills reason itself, kills the Image of God, as it were in the Eye. Many a Man lives a burden to the Earth; but a good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master-spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, where perhaps there is no great losse; and revolutions of ages doe not oft recover the losse of a rejected Truth, for the want of which whole Nations fare the worse. We should be wary therefore what persecution we raise against the living labours of publick men, how we spill that season'd life of man preserv'd and stor'd up in Bookes; since we see a kinde of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdome, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kinde of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elementall life, but strikes at that æthereall and fifth essence, the breathe of reason itself, slaies an immortality rather than a life."

From Burke's Speech at Bristol previous to the Election.

"GENTLEMEN,—Bad laws are the worst sort of tyranny. In such a country as this, they are of all bad things the worst, worse by far than anywhere else; and they derive a particular malignity even from the wisdom and soundness of the rest of our institutions.

"For very obvious reasons you cannot trust the Crown with any dispensing power over any of your laws. However, a government, be it as bad as it may, will, in the exercise of a discretionary power, discriminate times and persons, and will not ordinarily pursue any man, where its own safety is not concerned. A mercenary informer knows no distinction. Under such a system, the obnoxious people are slaves, not only to the government, but they live at the mercy of every individual; they are at once the slaves of the whole community, and of every part of it; and the worst and most unmerciful men are those on whose goodness they most depend.

"In this situation men not only shrink from the frowns of a stern magistrate, but they are obliged to fly from their very species. The seeds of destruction are sown in civil intercourse, in social habitudes. The blood of wholesome kindred is infected. Their tables and beds are surrounded with snares. All the means given by Providence to make life safe and comfortable are perverted into instruments of terror and torment. This species of universal subserviency, that makes the very servant who waits behind your chair the arbiter of your life and fortune, has such a tendency to degrade and debase mankind, and to deprive them of that assured and liberal state of mind which alone can make us what we ought to be, that I vow to God, I would sooner bring myself to put a man to immediate death for opinions I disliked, and so to get rid of the man and his opinions at once, than to fret him with a feverish being, tainted with the jail-distemper of a contagious servitude, to keep him above ground, an animated mass of putrefaction, corrupted himself, and corrupting all about him."

But if the study of such passages as these may expand as well as elevate our minds, and give us some sense of the very different ways in which great principles may be uttered by the men who have been possessed of them, do we not want some warnings

against the errors of style into which great men often fall, and especially against that terrible error of affectation? If rules would help us in this matter, we want them exceedingly. If we could ever be preserved from writing or speaking anything that is not simple, and natural, and manly, he who suggested the means of preservation would be worthy of our highest gratitude. But let me say, once for all, he that wants to be saved from this fault will never be saved from it by looking for it in another. The good which converse with noble writers will do him is, that they will enable him to detect it in himself. They will be very helpful in teaching us our un-English ways, and our affected ways. Sometimes they will teach it by the contrast of their own truthfulness and simplicity, sometimes by the pain which we shall find in seeing their deviations from the excellences which they have taught us to admire. I am touching here upon a very severe kind of criticism, a very disagreeable kind. It is when the judge discovers the culprit at his own door, in his own home. It is when he is brought to confess, "The things which I fancied I saw outside are here in me. This guilty man must not be let free, or I shall indeed be condemned." I suppose we should all like to escape that criticism if we could; but those who have had to undergo it have reason to thank God that they could not escape it, and to confess that all their notions of criticism were utterly false till they had passed through it.

I have spoken too long upon this subject, partly because as we all write prose we are all criticising ourselves when we speak of that, whereas if I passed to verse I should be entering upon a subject of which experience can tell me nothing. For that reason, if I thought criticism consisted in finding fault, or in laying down laws, or in punishing the guilty, I should hold my peace; because for me to undertake any one of these functions would be the sheerest usurpation. But, upon the other principle, he who has least of the poetical faculty may be most indebted to poets; they may have awakened in him perceptions, and given him an insight, which but for that influence he would have wanted more than any. And using this test, I believe we are not likely to become indiscriminate devourers of poetry, or to fail of a certain keen sense of what has power in it and what has not. We may find, indeed, that that does us good at one period which we thought lightly of at another. Comets that we wondered at may pass away, and stars that were hidden may come forth and shine very brightly. Every day, therefore, may make us more afraid of laying down censures, or of accepting those which would exclude this or that man from the roll of poetical teachers; but, on the other hand, every day will make us more indifferent to that which does not speak to ourselves, which merely plays about us without entering into us. There is no occasion to tell any person who admires such verses that he must not do so. We cannot the least tell that he must not. It may be very

good for him that he should. All we have to do is to be honest: not to pretend to be affected by that which does not affect us if it is ever so popular, not to deny that any does which is ever so unpopular; to sympathise with other people in their feelings as much as we can, and not to say more about our own than the circumstances demand. So by trying to be true and not false with ourselves, we shall come to have a relish for truth, and a dislike to falsehood wheresoever we meet with it.

But here again a caution is to be observed. The poetry which is not true in itself, which is merely imitated or adopted from others, may, nevertheless, not unfrequently be the expression of a true heart. This is a paradox which I can explain to you far better in the words of a very earnest and real poetess of our own day than in my own:—

"Many fervent souls
Strike rhyme on rhyme who would strike steel on steel
If steel had offered, in a restless heat
Of doing something. Many tender souls
Have strung their losses on a rhyming thread
As children cowslips: the more pains they take,
The work more withers. . . . .
You catch a glimpse of Nature earliest,
In full front sun face, and your eyelids wink
And drop before the wonder of 't; you miss
The form through seeing the light. I lived those days,
And wrote because I lived, unlicensed else.
My heart beat in my brain. Life's violent flood
Abolished bounds; and which my neighbour's field,
Which mine, what mattered? It is so in youth:

We play at leap-frog over the God Term.
The love within us and the love without
Are mixed, confounded; if we are loved or love,
We scarce distinguish. So with other power:
Being acted on and acting seem the same;
In that first on-rush of Life's chariot wheels
We know not if the forests move or we.
And so, like most young poets in a flush
Of individual life, I poured myself
Along the veins of others, and achieved
Mere lifeless imitations of live verse,
And made the living answer for the dead,
Profaning Nature. . . .
We call the Muse, 'O Muse, benignant Muse,'
As if we had seen the purple-braided head
With the eyes in it start between the boughs
As often as a stag's. What make-believe
With so much earnest! What effete results
From virile efforts! What cold wire-drawn Odes
From such white heats! Bucolics where the cows
Would scare the writer if they splashed the mud
In lashing off the flies! Didactics driven
Against the heels of what the Master said;
And counterfeiting epics, shrill with trumps,
A babe might blow between two straining cheeks
Of bubbled rose to make his mother laugh!
And elegiac griefs, and songs of love,
Like cast-off nosegays picked up on the road,
The worse for being warm: all these things writ
On happy mornings with a morning heart
That leaps for love, is active for resolve,
Weak for art only."

I hope I need not say that I understand Mrs. Browning to speak in these verses as a dramatist, not as an autobiographer. If I took them in the latter sense, I should have to protest against them as very unjust to

many true poems which bore the name of Elizabeth Barrett, which were no mere "cowslips on a rhyming thread," which have not withered, nor are likely to wither. Subject to that remark, I accept her words as a description no less wise and faithful than it is beautiful, of the true and honest and deep impulses which may lead young poets to write what is in itself feeble and short-lived. The lesson should not be lost on any critic who cares to do good and not to inflict pain.

The guilty men whom the original Edinburgh Reviewers desired to take vengance upon were chiefly among their contemporaries. But it is impossible that our judgments should be limited to them. Old writers, especially the writers of history, must stand a trial in our courts. And we shall deal with them upon the same principles, whoever they be, that we followed in the other case. A venerable person, say Herodotus or Livy, or one of our old English Chroniclers, is brought to the bar. It is discovered that certain stories occur in one or other of these writers which must be regarded as fables, not as authentic narratives. The rapid judge, terribly afraid that he shall be condemned if the culprit escapes, immediately writes "mythical" or "legendary" against the old book. "Very pretty," he says, "no doubt, for children. It is quite proper that they should have nursery tales such as we had in our days. But what are they to us? We know them to be false." A peremptory decision—perhaps satisfactory to him who

makes it; but not quite satisfactory to those who believe that there is such a thing as history, and who wish to discover what it is. They know that Sir Robert Walpole told his son not to read him history, for that he knew to be false. The clever statesman did not speak at all of the history which contains allusions to supernatural beings. He meant that with which he had been conversant all his life—that which he had been contributing to make. He meant the policy of Courts and Prime Ministers. He meant the speeches and votes in the House of Commons, and all the by-play that preceded them. These he had the best possible reasons for knowing to be false, or, at least, to contain a preponderating element of falsehood in them. And yet, out of these materials—out of memoirs written often by very dishonest men who did not wish to tell the truth—out of letters, and documents, and debates, often contrived for the very purpose of mystifying it—we do suppose we can extract something which is real, something which did actually happen. We even call that which is liable to all these perversions and contradictions "the historical period;" we boast that there we are out of the reach of legends. Therefore this kind of treatment—these broad classifications—will avail us very little if we are really wanting to understand the course of the world, and what has been done in it. There seems to be another kind of criterion altogether different from this; much more sifting, and at the same time much more reverent. The true critic must desire

to pierce through the confused and incoherent statements of one time as much as of another. And being convinced that there is eternal Truth at the bottom, that the world is God's world, and that no crafts or trickeries of men can cause it to be otherwise, he must always wish to get through every fiction that men have devised into the fact that is hidden beneath it. The most honest and faithful criticism of this time, instead of treating the old histories with contempt, has restored them to honour. It has acknowledged that the legends which they contain are often much more worthy of examination and study than those with which Sir Robert Walpole was conversant. A patient critic may not be sure that he has discovered what they mean. He may see glimpses of meaning which others may follow out; or he may have mistaken their meaning, and others may find the clue to it: but every step in his progress convinces him that it is there; that men did not make it, but found it, and generally marred it. He does not believe them to be liars because they thought the world was under supernatural guidance. He does not find that those whom Sir Robert Walpole knew, who had no such faith, lied less because they thought all things were left to them and their management. He is astonished to find how much the histories of all nations are involved with these supernatural records. He thinks *that* a fact well worth looking into. If he could find an interpretation of it, much would be cleared up to him that has puzzled him. He even

hopes that such an interpretation may exist. This is the other kind of criticism to which I alluded; and I believe there are many honourable and admirable specimens of it in our day. I think all good may be hoped for from such critics, because they believe in Truth, and because they are convinced that it can only be sought for in humility.

Before I quit this subject of historical, or, as it is sometimes called, philological criticism, I may give you an instance of the way in which the same man may exhibit the most clear and masterly judgment when he takes one of those courses of which I have been speaking, and may become feeble and contemptible when he deviates into the other. I believe it will be allowed by foreign scholars, as well as by English, that our countryman Richard Bentley was one of the subtlest diviners of the meaning of obscure passages, one of the most skilful detectors of forgery, one of those who understood best how to follow out a course of evidence, and to see how each point of it bore upon every other. Considering that he was naturally a rash, dogmatical, ill-tempered man, it is wonderful how all these bad qualities were held in check, and with what patience he could devote himself to the working out of a difficult historical problem when that was his object, only allowing his talent for guessing, which was unrivalled, to assist him in catching at hints which were afterwards to be verified by experiment. In this sense he is the beginner of a method in philological and historical studies

very like that which Bacon began in physical studies. But this same man, in an evil hour, set himself up as a judge and improver of "Paradise Lost." He could not admire the book, he knew nothing about it; but because he was a great critic he fancied he was a judge of poets, and was able to set them right. His emendations of this poem remain the greatest monument of absurdity that an ingenious man ever raised. They should be read by young men, not that they may laugh at one who was vastly superior to any critic of his own, or perhaps of later times, but as a solemn warning that the greatest possessor of the critical faculty becomes a fool when he thinks he can look down upon great authors instead of looking up to them,—when he fancies that he can measure them by his rules instead of seeking to know what were their rules, and what they themselves were.

But there are subjects more interesting to us—at least to most of us—than the mere examination of the sources of history ever can be. We may look at great periods of history, we may study the feelings and passions and objects of those who were the actors in them. Here is a field for those two kinds of critics I have been speaking of, to try their different plans in. When I speak of plans, however, I do not mean that all the plans of those who set up for judges, and look down upon the events and doers of past times as something far beneath them, will be the same. Of necessity they will be very various. Each of them stands

on his own pinnacle; he contemplates the ground below from that. One takes his measure from what he thinks the peculiar distinctions and glories of the nineteenth century. By these he judges of the twelfth century, or the sixteenth, or the seventeenth. So far as they departed from these they are all pronounced evil; so far as any approximates to these, there is in it an element of good. Another takes his stand on the maxims of the party in which he has been educated; everything is seen from a Whig or from a Tory point of view. One set of actors is seen to be fighting for everything that is holy and precious, the other for everything that is mean and detestable. There may be degrees of excellence on the one side, and degrees of villany on the other; but one carries the black flag and the other the white: that decides the question generally about leaders as well as privates. Another spectator dwells upon a more serene height than either of these. He looks down with impartial pity and contempt upon the whole struggle; all are foolish, all are wrong. He is ashamed of belonging to so contemptible a race of beings; it is quite amazing to him how we ever came to belong to them, why his habitation was not assigned him in some fixed star, entirely out of the reach of their passions and turmoils.

I do not say which of these different judges I should most wish to follow, if I must follow one of them. I will frankly tell you which I should least like to follow. I would rather be the most vehement and mad partisan

than one of those cold contemners of all parties and of all men. Wordsworth speaks of one of his heroines

> "As dwelling in a sky
> Of undisturb'd humanity."

I never liked the phrase, or envied the position. But it seems to me that *these* men have attained a sky of undisturbed inhumanity; and therefore I could most heartily say in this sense, "Save, oh save me from the impartial man!" But I apprehend that there is a kind of criticism which does not make it needful that we should be partisans in order to escape from this worse calamity. If we once abdicate that high position of being law-givers, and wish rather to know what the law is under which we are all placed, and to obey that, we may take most interest in those parts of our history which have been most stirring; we may wish nothing less than that they had not been stirring; we may complain of nothing less than the earnestness of those who were engaged in them on either side. It is not their earnestness which hurts us, except that it shames us for having so little of the same quality, for believing so little, for being so cowardly in asserting what we believe. Their earnestness, we may be sure, was given to them because they were asserting a principle which it was worth while to live and to die for,—I mean that each party was asserting such a principle; that in our civil wars, for instance, there was not one atom too much of zeal on either side for what that side felt to be at stake, not one atom which we could afford to dispense with—the

absence of which would not have been to us the most grievous loss. It is the pettiness and selfishness which mingled with this earnestness, the little, low motives which had nothing to do with the principle, and which curdled and made sour that which had to do with it,—*this* is what we are to hate; for this is what we know in ourselves to be the cause of all our individual feebleness, of all our national degeneracy. We cannot criticise it in them till we have criticised it first in ourselves. When we have, the more heartily we condemn it the more heartily we shall reverence all the better thoughts and feelings which were struggling against it in every party and in every man; the more we shall be sure that *those* had a divine origin and a permanent strength; the more we shall be sure that they have each brought in their contribution to the national strength, and that they will unite to make it stronger still when the spirits that have degraded and held them down shall be cast out.

In what I have said on this subject I have thought particularly of the period of our own civil wars, because that has suffered more than perhaps any from the partial as well as the pseudo-impartial temper, and because no time would reward us more if it were studied in a hearty, sympathising, reverential spirit, which would not suffer us to pervert or warp any documents to suit a purpose of ours, which would enable us to discern, much more clearly than we ever have done, that Divine purpose which is working itself out through all the

most contradictory and self-willed movements of men. But the principles which are applicable to this crisis are applicable to all times. They would enable us to do justice even to those torpid and stagnant times which often follow great excitements, into which great men seem not to be born, or in which they become changed into little men, being dwarfed, not by their circumstances, but by their own submission to circumstances, by their want of earnest faith in a power that could raise them above circumstances. Even in such times as these, the true critic of history will see that the same laws are at work as in those which bring forth all the good that is in men, and all the evil, into full display. They will learn that nothing is so ignominious as that craving for great men to appear, as if the universe depended upon them; as if each man may not do right in his own sphere without waiting for them, or asking whether there are such or not; as if the very longing for them were not a part of that restlessness which interferes with all greatness and checks the growth of it. In fact, what I have been chiefly maintaining throughout this lecture is, that the desire to be kings, and judges, and law-makers, has been one main cause why we have not done more, and are not capable of more; and that if we would turn the faculty which we suppose qualifies us for kings and law-givers to another use, we might obtain blessings and honours of which our ambition to be grand deprives us.

I am, however, very far from thinking that one of

the main uses of criticism is not to recover the illustrious men whom God has given us from the misrepresentations of opponents who hated them, or of admirers who did not understand them. In every case, I think we shall find that those who have spoken of great men either as *their* men, those who were doing *their* work, and propagating *their* opinions, or who have attacked them because they were *not* doing their work and propagating their opinions, or have overlooked them as if they were their inferiors, and might receive a sentence of applause or disapproval from them, have always done something to distort facts, and to make their biographies false. And I believe everyone who has affectionately, and in a serious respectful spirit, tried to understand what they meant, and what they were living for, has found apparently the most heterogeneous testimonies, helping him to bring out the live man who had been turned into a hero or a monster, or into a mere collection of dried bones, which is something worse than a monster. It is not, of course, possible to prove this in all cases, because people write biographies from many mixed motives; and genuine affection, which is always favourable to truth, may mix with party motives, which are favourable to falsehood; but I think that our age has furnished abundant examples to prove that biography may be the most worthless or the most profitable of all studies. And in every case where it is profitable, we owe it to a resolute determination on the part of the

biographer not to put himself in the place of his subject, or above his subject. It is, I know, very difficult indeed to avoid this temptation. The thought will be suggested again and again to the biographer by others, and it will rise up in himself, "Ought not I to be moralizing upon this or that fact of the life? Am I right if I do not express my opinion about it?" And then comes the wish to see the thing just a little different from what it was—the desire, if possible, to make the facts tell a tale, so that they shall point the moral better. The temptation is great. But if we are assured that it is a temptation to do an immoral and a false thing we can resist it. Now, I apprehend, the desire to moralize upon the acts of our fellow-creatures rather than to exhibit them as they are, arises from the very same motive which leads painters to put into nature what they do not find there. I know nothing of Pre-Raphaelite controversies, and am too stupid about art to be able to say one word on the criticism which has reference to it. But if any persons say that we ought to look straight at Nature, hoping that in due time she will reveal her meaning to us, if it is ever so slow in coming, and that in the meantime we are not to anticipate her lessons, or to put any of our notions or fancies into her, by way of making her look prettier and more agreeable: this seems to me honest and true doctrine, which, I suppose, must apply to that department, because I know no other connected with human life to which it does not apply. In biographies I am afraid

that religious men are often the most prone to depart from it, though they have the least excuse for doing so, and the most solemn and encouraging warning to do otherwise. For in the book which they regard as their rule and model, there is no moralizing about the lives which are given to us. They contain their own moral. We profane it and destroy it when, instead of seeking to bring it forth, we adorn it with additions of our own.

I have spoken more than once of the danger we are in of judging other times by the standard of our own, and of the correction of this tendency, which lies in the true criticism that seeks to see ages and men just as they were. But the judging lordly temper may take another and apparently opposite direction. We may utterly scorn our own time, and set up some other time against it. We may fill the air with wailings about the decay of all heroism, the loss of all wisdom, in that century in which it is our bitter misfortune to be born. This is, no doubt, a reaction against the other tendency. We may often oscillate between the one and the other; and when we have settled that we will like some period in the world's history better than this, we may often change our opinions which it shall be,—the Classical Ages, or the early Christian Ages, or the Middle Ages, or the Age of the Reformation. It is scarcely possible that we should rest in any one of these; we shall probably try them all in turn. For each one will show us some bright image which we feel that we have need of;

and then each one will turn its darkened side to us and will show us deformities which we have never dreamt of. How can there be any end of this? Shall we ever come at *the* heroic period, *the* golden age? No, thank God; that is not in any one of the ages, but in all of them. The good men, the heroes, whenever such appeared, sought for it close to them and not at a distance. And they were able to see it because they were not going up into the heaven or down into the deep to discover it. We want a criticism which shall do justice to the time in which we are born, to the men who live in it, just as much as to any time gone by,—which shall do justice not to its modes and fashions, which are worth just as much as the modes and fashions of any other age and no more; not to its inventions, though we may rejoice in them, and do all honour to the patient toil and thought which has produced them; but to that in it which is most common, most human, to that which does not separate us from other times but unites us to them. May not our work to find out this common bond of fellowship give it a higher dignity than all those peculiar treasures that we think others had and we have lost? If we are driven in our weakness to ask how all may be men, can we not leave the heroes to the elder generations? Is it not possible, after all, that a man may be more glorious than a hero? that to be on a level with all, and to feel that the lowliest is the highest, may be better than to vaunt of some great champions and representatives, who make

us think even more highly of ourselves than of them?

It appears to me that this may be the function of that criticism which I said, in the beginning of my lecture, our age was in some especial manner bound to cultivate. When it takes that form, which I have endeavoured to show is its only reasonable form, it puts us in commerce with all generations and with all human beings. It may enable us to make all their possessions our own while we are most ready to acknowledge them as theirs. The true critical discernment which separates that which is capricious and transitory from that which abides, that which belongs to all from that which may be the rightful and proper inheritance of some here and some there, must make everyone richer. That criticism which distinguishes between the substance and the shadow, the reality and its counterfeit, must bring us into nearer connection with truth, and therefore with freedom. That criticism which leads us to humble ourselves that we may see a beauty, and a goodness, and a glory which are not ours, must be a great deliverance from the frivolity and vanity which are so natural to us, and which the false habit of criticism is continually fostering.

Whether this is the style of criticism which prevails most among us in the present day, whether it is this which has given popularity to our periodical literature, whether it is this which guides the judgment of our newspapers respecting books, or art, or men, I do not

take upon myself to decide. I am not a judge, either to absolve them or to condemn them. I am not afraid of being judged for not judging. But I am sure, that whether it has established itself or not into a rule and habit, the impulse to prefer this kind of criticism to the other is growing amongst us, and that some of our best writers of books, if not of periodicals, have done much to encourage it, and to show us excellent examples of it; and that wherever such examples are presented to any class of our countrymen, especially, if I may be allowed to say so, to the largest and most important class of all, there is a cordial response to them. I might repeat many names which it would be an honour to me to speak and which you would hear with respect and gratitude. I will allude to but one, which in this town I could hardly pass over, and yet which it is unnecessary and somewhat bold in me to refer to in your presence. There was a lecture delivered between four and five years ago. I do not know whether it was in this hall or to this society, which most of you will have read and all will have heard of. It was a lecture on the influence of poetry, addressed especially to the working classes.[1] It appears to have been called forth by a particularly vulgar criticism upon one of the greatest poems of our day, or of any day. It is itself a specimen of that best kind of criticism which delights to draw forth the sense and beauty of a book, and is able to do so because the heart of the critic is in sym-

[1] Lecture by the Rev. Frederick Robertson.

pathy with the heart of the writer. Though with much rarer opportunities than you had of being acquainted with the speaker, I can bring before myself the look of scorn which must have been on that beautiful countenance when he denounced the low wit of the reviewer, and that look of genial cordial appreciation which spoke of the sorrow, the conflicts, and the hopes of the poet. He knows, as we do not, what is the full explanation of such sorrows, and the fulfilment of such hopes. But this we may know,—no instance can more feelingly remind us of it,—that the words which come forth out of lips that have been touched with a fire from heaven spread furthest, and exercise the mightiest power, when those lips are closed; that he who is severest to himself is the most tolerant of others; that there is no criticism which reaches our follies and our sins like that of a warm-hearted and loving man.

THE END.

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